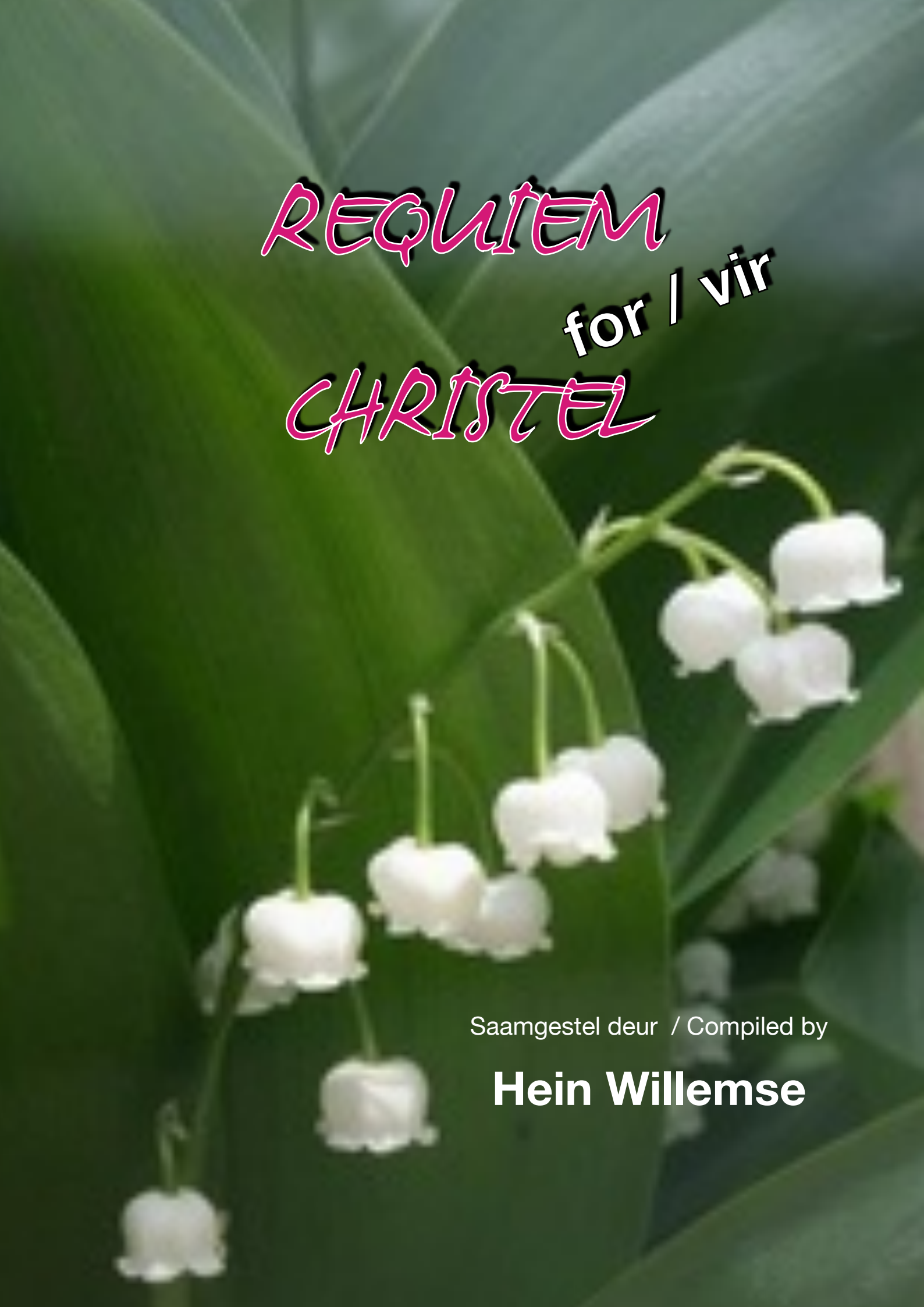

Saamgestel deur / Compiled by

Hein Willemse

REQUIEM

for / vir

CHRISTEL

REQUIEM for / vir CHRISTEL

Saamgestel deur / Compiled by

Hein Willemse

astREC

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Requiem for/vir Christel

Uitgegee deur / Published by
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Omslagfoto: Lelietjie-van-dalen (*Convallaria majalis*), inheems tot die Noordelike Halfrond, word dikwels met reinheid, nederigheid en geluk geassosieer. As 'n lenteblom simboliseer dit hoop en hernuwing—'n teken van 'n nuwe begin en die sikliese aard van die lewe. In die Christelike tradisie word dit soms verbind aan die Maagd Maria, as 'n voorstelling van haar trane wat by die kruisiging van Christus gestort is.

*Cover picture: Lily-of-the-valley (*Convallaria majalis*), native to the Northern Hemisphere, is often associated with purity, humility, and happiness. As a springtime flower, it symbolises hope and renewal—signifying new beginnings and the cyclical nature of life. In Christian tradition, it is sometimes linked to the Virgin Mary, representing her tears shed at the crucifixion of Christ.*

Van die vertalings in hierdie publikasie is aanvanklik met verskeie kunsmatige intelligensietoepassings gegenereer waarna dit geredigeer is.

Some of the translations in this publication were initially generated using various artificial intelligence applications, and were subsequently edited.

Slegs 50 eksemplare van hierdie publikasie is gedruk.
Only 50 copies of this publication have been published.

Set in 11pt on 14pt Cochin

Ter herinnering aan / In remembrance of

Christel

28 November 1963—22 April 2025

Video: “Christel Pictorial”
https://youtu.be/8XIai8YD7nM

Mosselbaai, Mossel Bay 1963

Teen die einde van Junie 1962 vertrek Stephen en Cathy Willemse en hul vier kinders van Ladismith in die Klein Karoo na Mosselbaai aan die kus.

Stephen is in die Poskantoor tot 'n senior posbesteller bevorder. Na bemiddeling van eerw. Karl Roeder woon hulle in 'n huis op die terrein van die Evangeliese Lutherse Kerk en Skool, tussen Montagu- en Hoogstraat.

Dit is hier, in hierdie geloofsomgewing, waar Christel op 28 November 1963 gebore is. Die vroegste beskikbare foto is dié van haar doopdag, 1 Maart 1964 — 'n oomblik liefdevol vasgevang met haar ouers.

Hier sit Stephen (40) en Cathy (37) langs die skoolklok van die Lutherse Primêre Skool.

In late June 1962, Stephen and Cathy Willemse, along with their four children, left Ladismith in the Little Karoo and settled in the coastal town of Mossel Bay.

Stephen had been promoted to the position of senior postman at the Post Office, and with the help of Rev. Karl Roeder, the family found a home on the grounds of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, nestled between Montagu and High Street.

It was here, in this faith-filled environment, that Christel was born on 28 November 1963. The earliest photograph of her is from her baptism day, 1 March 1964 — a moment lovingly captured with her parents,

Stephen (aged 40) and Cathy (aged 37), are seated beside the old school bell of the Lutheran Primary School.

March 1, 1964

Christel was baptised on Sunday, March 1, 1964, in the Evangelical Lutheran Church on Montagu Street, Mossel Bay. Her godparents were John P. Theys, principal of Friedrich Scheffler Primary School, and his wife, Ruth.

The occasion was a deeply meaningful one—not only for the family but also for the wider church congregation. In a remarkable gesture, Rev. Friedrich Scheffler (1874–1966), known as "Ou Meneer," who had served the congregation faithfully since 1920, came out of retirement to officiate the baptism. The service took place on his 90th birthday, adding even greater significance to the moment.

Christel on her day of baptism with her father, Stephen, and the children, Heinrich, Anton, Marial and Clive, 1 March 1964.

Christel op haar doopdag met Pa Stephen en die kinders, Heinrich, Anton, Marial en Clive, 1 Maart 1964

Christel with her aunt Catharina Fourie (Kitty), her Dad's sister, who travelled from Paarl to attend the occasion.

Christel met haar tannie Catharina Fourie (Kitty), haar pa se suster wat van Paarl gereis het om die geleentheid by te woon.

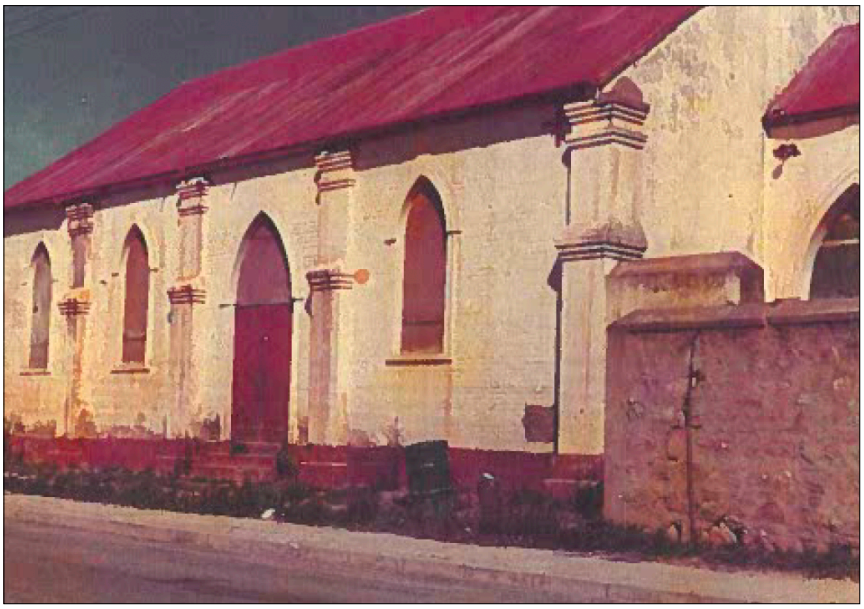
1 Maart 1964

Christel is op Sondag, 1 Maart 1964 in die Evangeliese Lutherse Kerk op Montagustraat, Mosselbaai gedoop met die hoof van Friedrich Scheffler Primêre Skool, John P. Theys en sy vrou Ruth as haar peetouers.

Haar doop was nie net 'n besondere geleentheid vir die gesin nie, maar ook vir die gemeente. Dit is merkwaardig dat eerw. Friedrich Scheffler (1874-1966), bekend as "Ou Meneer", wat die gemeente sedert 1920 gedien het, sy aftrede verbreek het om die doop op sy 90ste verjaarsdag waar te neem.

Christel met haar ouer sibbe op haar doopdag. Die "onbekende" is Margot Fourie. Die aantekeninge op die foto is dié van hulle niggie, Sheila Samuels.

Christel and her older siblings on her day of baptism. The "unknown" is Margot Fourie. The notes on the photograph are those of their cousin, Sheila Samuels.



Die Evangeliese Lutherse Kerk Montagustraat, Mosselbaai.

The Evangelical Lutheran Church Montagu Street, Mossel Bay.

28 November 1964

“Christel is benoem deur ’n Duitse vriendin van die Lutherse pastoriepaar, Karl en Martha Roeder, op Mosselbaai. Sy dra ’n familienaam, Dorothy, en Joy wat vreugde beteken.”
Uit: Catherine Willemse, *Met ’n diepe verlange* (2006), p. 103.

“Christel was named by a German friend of the Lutheran pastor and his wife, Karl and Martha Roeder, in Mossel Bay. She carries a family name, Dorothy, and Joy, which means joy.”
From: Catherine Willemse, *Met ’n diepe verlange* (2006), p. 103.

Christel op haar eerste verjaarsdag, Saterdag, 28 November 1964.
Christel on her first birthday, Saturday, 28 November 1964.

28 November 1964

Christel op haar eerste verjaarsdag met haar sibbe: Anton (4, jaar, 11 maande), Heinrich (7), Clive (6) en Marial (2 jaar 10 maande), 28 November 1964.

Christel on her first birthday with her siblings: Anton (4 years, 11 months), Heinrich (7), Clive (6) and Marial (2 yrs, 10 months), 28 November 1964.

Teen die einde van Junie 1962 vertrek Stephen en Cathy Willemse en hul vier kinders van Ladismith in die Klein Karoo na Mosselbaai aan die kus.

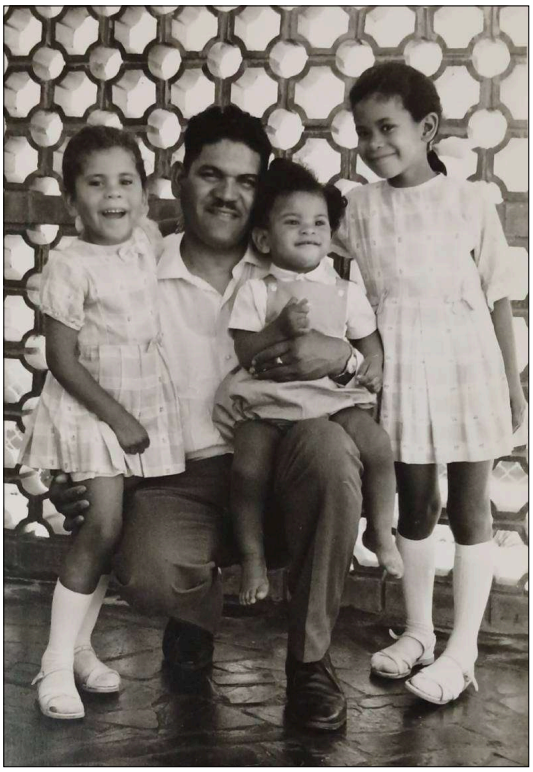
In late June 1962 Stephen and Cathy Willemse, along with their four children, left Ladismith in the Little Karoo and settled in the coastal town of Mossel Bay.

Augustus, August 1966

In Augustus 1966 vertrek Stephen en Cathy Willemse en hul vyf kinders van Mosselbaai na Worcester in die Boland. Die foto is in 1964 geneem.

In August 1966 Stephen and Cathy Willemse, along with their five children, left Mossel Bay to settle in Worcester in the Boland. This photograph was taken in 1964.

Worcester, 1966-1975



Christel in Worcester met Pa en Ma Willemse: Links bo: met Marial in eenderse rokkies en wit kuitkouse met frilletjies (1966). Regs bo: met Marial en 'n tien-maand oue Paul (1968). Links onder: as 'n jong meisie met Marial en Paul (1973). Regs onder: in haar blou rok met die wye geplooide some (1974).

Christel in Worcester with Dad and Mom Willemse: Top left: with Marial in matching dresses and white calf-length frilly socks (1966). Top right: with Marial and a ten-month-old Paul (1968). Bottom left: as a young girl with Marial and Paul (1973). Bottom right: in her blue dress with the wide pleated hem (1974).

‘To everything there is a season’

Paul Willemse

“To everything there is a season, a time for every matter under heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance; a time to keep, and a time to cast away.”
— Ecclesiastes 3:1

We gather here today to celebrate the life of Christel Dorothy Joy Willemse. Her sudden departure leaves a void and we, the family, are still processing our loss and work through our pain and grief.

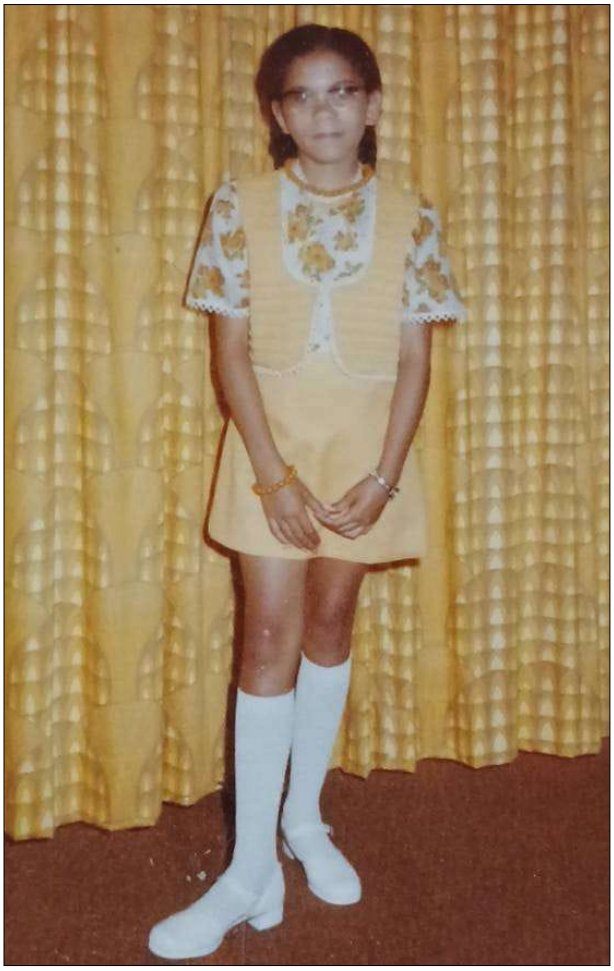
Christel was born on the 28th of November 1963 in the coastal town of Mossel Bay. She was the second youngest of a family of six siblings. She was named by a German friend of our Lutheran Minister and his wife, the Roeders in Mossel Bay. The name Christel means “anointed one” or the “chosen one.” Dorothy is a maternal family name and Joy means literally “joy”. These names would be so descriptive, telling and relevant in her later life. Christel was the only one in our family to be born in Mossel Bay, a fact that she was proud of. Every time we passed Mossel Bay or went there to visit she would remind us of this fact.

She grew up in Worcester, attending Esselen Park Primary School. I was still in the middle phase, and she was a senior at Primary School, and I remember every time she entered the class I was in, the other kids would say “Juffrou, dit is Paul se suster” (Miss, this is Paul’s sister). Christel would then look at the kids slightly annoyed and search for my face and smile. She went on to Esselen Park High School. She later obtained her matric and a Certificate in Office Administration.

Christel had an impressive vocabulary; I remember that she liked reading and that she could write very meaningful and imaginative essays. I was reminded of this when a Facebook friend mentioned her love of Afrikaans while they were in Standard 6 (today’s Grade 8). I also recall that Christel tried her hand at short story writing, unfortunately these attempts are now nowhere to be found.

Christel was also a Sunday School teacher in this very Calvin Protestant Church as Derick Schroeder reminded me when he offered his condolences.

Christel struggled with her health after a near-fatal swimming accident as a child in



Christel, (Christmas, Worcester, 1974).

Still Bay. However, that did not define her, and she was able to rise above it and live a full life.

Christel was well known for praying; like our mother, she could deliver inspiring prayers—the kind that truly touched your heart, both literally and figuratively.

She was the personification of a prayer warrior. If you were sitting under her prayer, you would feel the powerful effects of it. A few days before her death, I happened to be hospitalised. While in hospital she prayed for me. In that hospital bed I could feel the powerful effects of her prayer touching me. Christel was very concerned about my health and the last time I saw her was also the last time she prayed for me on Easter Saturday.

At family gatherings she was the one that would say, "Kom ons bid eers" ("Come let's pray) before and after an event. We will surely miss her presence at these meetings and her call to prayer.

Christel celebrated every birthday at our home. We will miss those times, and her place at our birthday table will now be silent.

Christel always had her Bible open in the sitting room and she would pray over the Scripture. Her acknowledgement of God in her life was real and sincere.

Christel had a wide and varied friendship circle. People from all walks of life old and young. The one thing that bound everyone together was their shared love for the Lord and shared fellowship.

Christel was known as a people person, and we experienced that this week during the prayer meeting at her home in Buitenkant Street.

She worked for many years as a receptionist for Dr. Kahnovitz. After his retirement, she ventured into radio and was a part-time presenter during the early days of Radio Vallei.

She later worked at Foschini, which brings us to Christel's other great love: fashion. She loved clothing—or rather, she loved *beautiful* clothes. She was always impeccably dressed, and yes, she was a proud person, something that was reflected in her appearance. She also often experimented with different hairstyles and would come show us to get our opinions.

Christel could converse intelligently about current affairs, and she was an enthusiastic sports supporter, very patriotic when it came to South African sports teams—especially the national cricket and rugby teams.

Christel is survived by four brothers and a sister. She leaves behind a void that will never be filled.

I want to close this tribute with Matthew 25:21—"Well done, thou good and faithful servant; enter into thy joy."

I thank you.

Saturday, 3 May 2025

Christel (Worcester, 1978).

‘Vir alles is daar ’n bepaalde tyd’

Paul Willemse

“Vir alles is daar ’n bepaalde tyd, ’n tyd vir elke saak onder die hemel; ’n tyd om gebore te word, en ’n tyd om te sterwe; ’n tyd om te plant, en ’n tyd om uit te trek wat geplant is; ’n tyd om te ween, en ’n tyd om te lag; ’n tyd om te treur, en ’n tyd om te dans; ’n tyd om te bewaar, en ’n tyd om weg te werp.”
— Prediker 3:1

Ons is vandag hier bymekaar om die lewe van Christel Dorothy Joy Willemse te vier. Haar skielike heengaan laat 'n leemte, en ons as familie is steeds besig om hierdie verlies te verwerk en deur ons pyn en hartseer te werk.

Christel is op 28 November 1963 in die kusdorp Mosselbaai gebore. Sy was die tweede jongste van ses kinders. Haar naam is gegee deur die Duitse vriendin van die Lutherse predikant en sy vrou, die Roeders in Mosselbaai. Die naam *Christel* beteken “gesalfde een” of “uitverkore een”. *Dorothy* is 'n familienaam aan moederskant, en *Joy* beteken letterlik “vreugde”. Hierdie name sou in later jare so treffend en betekenisvol in haar lewe word. Christel was die enigste een in ons gesin wat in Mosselbaai gebore is — iets waarop sy trots was. Elke keer as ons verby Mosselbaai gery het, of daar besoek afgelê het, sou sy ons daaraan herinner.

Sy het in Worcester grootgeword en was 'n leerder aan Esselenpark Laerskool. Ek was toe nog in die middelgraad van laerskool, en sy was in die senior fase. Ek onthou hoe die kinders altyd gesê het, “Juffrou, dit is Paul se suster,” wanneer sy die klas betree het. Christel sou dan effens geërgerd na my kyk, my gesig soek, en dan glimlag. Daarna het sy na Esselenpark Hoërskool gegaan. Sy het haar matriek voltooi en later 'n Sertifikaat in Kantooradministrasie behaal.

Christel het 'n indrukwekkende woordeskat gehad; ek onthou haar liefde vir lees en haar vermoë om betekenisvolle en verbeeldingryke opstelle te skryf. 'n Facebook-vriendin het my onlangs daaraan herinner toe sy vertel het van Christel se liefde vir Afrikaans in standerd 6 (vandag se graad 8). Ek onthou hoe Christel kortverhale geskryf het — ongelukkig is daar geen spoor van daardie stories vandag nie.

Christel met Ouma Miemie Willemse op die dag van haar aanneming in die Calvyn Protestante Kerk (Worcester, 2 November 1980).

Christel was ook 'n Sondagskool-onderwyseres in hierdie Calvyn Protestantse Kerk, soos Derick Schroeder my daaraan herinner het toe hy sy meegevoel uitgespreek het.

Sy het gesukkel met haar gesondheid na 'n amper noodlottige swemongeluk as kind in Stilbaai. Maar dit het haar nie gedefinieer nie — sy het dit oorkom en 'n vol lewe gelei. Christel was welbekend as 'n voorbidder. Net soos ons ma, kon sy

kragtige en besielende gebede bid — die soort gebede wat jou letterlik en figuurlik aan die hart gryp. Sy *was* die personifikasie van 'n gebedstryder. As jy onder haar gebed gesit het, kon jy die krag daarvan voel. 'n Paar dae voor haar dood was ek in die hospitaal opgeneem. Terwyl ek daar gelê het, het sy vir my gebid. Ek kon die krag van daardie gebed fisies ervaar. Christel was baie bekommerd oor my gesondheid, en die laaste keer wat ek haar gesien het — Paassaterdag — was ook die laaste keer wat sy vir my gebid het.

Christel se Bybel het altyd oopgelê in die sitkamer, en sy sou bid oor die Skrifgedeeltes. Haar erkenning van God in haar lewe was eg en opreg.

By familiebyeenkomste was sy altyd die een wat gesê het: "Kom ons bid eers," voor en ná die geleentheid. Ons gaan haar teenwoordigheid en daardie oproep tot gebed by hierdie byeenkomste baie mis.

Christel het elke verjaardag in ons huis meegemaak. Ons gaan daardie tye mis, en haar plek by die verjaardagtafel sal nou leeg wees.

Sy het 'n wye en uiteenlopende vriendekring gehad — mense van alle ouderdomme en agtergronde. Wat almal egter saamgebind het, was hulle gedeelde liefde vir die Here en die gemeenskaplike geloofsband.

Christel met haar suster Marial (Worcester, 2 November 1980).
Christel se ouers, Stephen en Cathy (Worcester, November 1980).

Christel was bekend as 'n "mense-mens", en ons kon dit eerstehands ervaar hierdie week tydens die biduur by haar huis in Buitenkantstraat.

Christel het lank gewerk as ontvangsdame by dr. Kahnovitz. Ná sy aftrede het sy haar hand aan radiowerk gewaag en was sy 'n deeltydse omroeper in die vroeë dae van Radio Vallei. Sy het later ook by Foschini gewerk — en dit bring ons by een van Christel se ander groot liefdes: mode. Sy het van klere gehou — kom ek stel dit beter: Christel het van *mooi* klere gehou. Jy kon haar altyd deur 'n ring trek. Ja, sy was 'n trotse persoon, en dit was sigbaar in haar kleredrag. Sy het gereeld met nuwe haarstyle geëksperimenteer en dit dan vir ons kom wys vir 'n opinie.

Christel kon intelligent praat oor die sake van die dag.

Sy was 'n ywerige sportondersteuner en baie patrioties oor Suid-Afrikaanse sportspanne, veral die nasionale krieket- en rugbyspanne.

Christel word oorleef deur vier broers en 'n suster. Sy laat 'n leemte wat nie weer gevul kan word nie.

Ek wil hierdie huldeblyk afsluit met Matteus 25:21: "Welgedaan, goeie en getroue dienskneg; gaan in in die vreugde van jou Here."

Ek dank u.

Saterdag 3 Mei 2025.

Die maat op my pad

Rochelle Saayman

Ek beskou hierdie huldeblyk regtig waar as 'n voorreg en 'n genadekans. Weet u daar is 'n manier waarop die Here mense op jou pad sit. Miskien sal jy dit nie nou besef nie, maar soos die tyd aangaan, soos die jare aangaan, dan besef jy die Here het jou daardie spesiale maatjie op jou pad gesit of vriendin op jou pad gesit, vir 'n tyd in jou lewe, en dit was Christel Willemse.

Ek het twee skrifgedeeltes wat ek vanoggend wil aanhaal rondom Christel se lewe. Die eerste skrif waaroor ek gemediteer het hierdie week is Matteus 12:20 – "'n Geknakte riet sal Hy nie verbreek nie, en 'n lamppit wat rook, sal Hy nie uitblus nie." Nou êrens in ons, lewe, êrens in my lewe was daar 'n tyd gewees toe my lamp ook 'n bietjie gerook het, maar dan kom die Here en hy sit 'n maatjie op jou pad om die vlam weer aan die gang te sit. Dan kry 'n mens weer moed om op hierdie *journey* aan te gaan.

Christel met Rochelle Saayman (Worcester, 2019).

Nou dit was waaroor ek gemediteer het: hoe vriendskappe mekaar omvorm en hoe ons voort moet bou op daardie lamp, daardie lig op ons pad. Dit is wat ek kan sê van Christel.

Die Here is so getrou. Ons het 'n vriendskap gehad van *fellowship*. Ek kan so baie dinge deel van Christel. Ek weet wat dit is om saam met haar te lag. Ek weet wat dit is om saam met haar te huil. Ek weet wat dit is om saam met haar te dans en dinge te deel, en oorslaap, selfs in een bed. Ek het gekuier by haar, en sy was een Kersfees na my familie toe. Ek kan oor so baie van die dinge praat hier vandag. Sy was daardie spesiale vriendin in my lewe.

Ek wil vir die broers en suster vandag sê, Christel was baie, baie lief vir haar familie. As ek altyd ingekom het by haar huis dan kon sy nie gewag het dat ek moet sit nie. Dan sê sy, "Hallo, hallo, hallo, kom in, kom in! Sit!" Dan sê sy, "Kom ek wil vir jou 'n bietjie vat na die kombuis toe. Wat dink jy van dié kleur?" Sy was daai mens wat lief was vir mooi dinge en vir mooi plek maak en so, "Wat dink jy van dié kleur nou in die kombuis? Ervaar jy nie my ma so 'n bietjie hier nie?" Dan sê ek, "Ja".

Oh, her family was always there. Although she was living there, her family was present. Sy het van elke broer en suster van haar gepraat,

even when they may have been
living in Cape Town or elsewhere.
You were present there in that

house. Sy het 'n verskriklike liefde gehad vir haar ma en vir haar pa en haar familie.

Nou, wil ek praat oor die *fellowship*, die bediening. Christel het saam met my gaan bedien by Avondrus, die outehuis. Dit was so lekker gewees om mense na die Here toe te lei. Sy het daai passie gehad van "ons moet nou bid". Ons het daardie vriendskap gehad.

Die skrifgedeelte wat ek wil aanhaal is, *is that she was a compassionate person*. Sy het daardie *passionate anointing* gehad. *Many times you won't understand,* maar hoekom is daai persoon nou so. Maar dan laat die Here jou stil sit en deel met jou oor daardie persoon.

And she had that compassionate anointing for our community, that is to understand other people's suffering. Dit is wat ek kan sê, *even in small ways she always helped people, giving them a loaf of bread, helping the gardener.* Ons het 'n stryd gehad met Esselen Park Sekondêre Skool se kinders. Sy het nie gehuiwer om oor die pad te stap en vir hulle te sê, "Boeta, boeta, druk in jou hemp."

She was that kind of person. So I want to say today, she had compassion and a deep calling to help. It was a tangible expression of love for those suffering or in need. Dit is wat sy was, en sy het daai ekstra myl geloop.

Ons het in Worcester geloop. Dierbares ons het geloop: Roodewal, Hex Park. Ek is van die Kaap oorspronklik en ek weet hoe gaan dit daar. Ons klim net in die kar en daar ry ons. Maar die Here het my na Worcester toe gebring en so het ons die paaie van Worcester gestap. Dan stap ons. Dan sê sy, "Kom ons stop eers hier 'n bietjie."

Ja, dit is wie en wat Christel was, en baie keer het ons so baie dinge gedeel en dan sê sy vir my, "Kom ons sit eers 'n bietjie lipstiffie aan" of "Kom ons doen 'n bietjie naels." Dit is die tipe mens wat sy was, altyd *perfume* moet jou gedeel of lipstiffie met jou gedeel. Enige ding wat Christel aan kon gedink het, het sy gedeel met jou.

That is the person that she was. Ja, ons het ons dae gehad wat ons miskien mekaar nie verstaan het nie, *but we always worked it out, because we knew we were sisters in Christ. We needed to work things out, because* ons is mos nie daai perfekte mense nie. *But I loved her very, very, very dearly. I want to salute her here today for the person she was here on earth.*

Ek kan daardie gedagte van haar volg: *Never stop to pray family. That is the person Christel was.* Sy het altyd . . . die eerste punt van haar gebed was, "Kom ons moet bid vir my familie". *So I can take that with me today.* Ek kan vir myself sê, moet nooit vergeet, om vir jou familie te bid nie. *I loved her dearly.*

My liefste vriendin Christel

Jy was die sonskyn in my lewe en 'n voorwaardelike vrou wat 'n gebedslewe gehad het. Ek onthou ons lekker kuiertjies ontspannend en hardop glimlaggies en die rustige atmosfeer wat jy altyd geskep het! Ek kon enige tyd, enige oomblik kon ek jou bel en jy sou my oornooi. Ek mis jou verskriklik baie veral jou bemoedigende woorde wanneer nodig. Jy was voorwaar 'n vriendin asook 'n suster in Christus duisend.

Ons kon lekker kuier. Ons kon gesels oor ditjies en datjies, en daarna sou jy sê: "Kom ons bid, Franzail". Jou warme, jou glimlag, jou liefde, sal ek altyd koester. Jy is een uit 'n miljoen van wie ek regtig voorwaar kan sê: Ek het jou diep binne my hart ingebêre, Christel.

Die warmte wat jy altyd gehad het vir ál God se mense. Dit het my hart ge-*move* altyd en jou liefde wat jy gehad het vir die Here. Dit was regtig aansteeklik gewees, Christel. Jy het glad nie geskroom wanneer dit kom by God se werk kom nie.

Ek verlang na jou, Christel. Ek verlang na jou. Ja, ons was baie *close* die afgelope tyd en ek is ontsettend baie lief vir jou. Ek koester jou vir altyd in my hart.

Ek gun jou die rus, en ja, ons sal mekaar eendag weer sien.

Liefde,

Franzail

The companion on my path

Rochelle Saayman

I truly see the opportunity to give this tribute as a privilege and an opportunity of grace.

You know, there is a way in which the Lord places people on your path. Maybe you won't realise it right away, but as time goes on, as the years go by, you realise the Lord placed that special friend or companion on your path for a season in your life—and that was Christel Willemse.

There are two scriptures I want to share this morning about Christel's life. The first scripture I meditated on this week is Matthew 12:20 – *"A bruised reed He will not break, and a smouldering wick He will not snuff out."* Somewhere in life, somewhere in my own life, there was a time when my lamp also smoked a little, but then the Lord comes and places a friend on your path to help ignite that flame again. Then you find the courage to keep going on this journey. That's what I meditated on—how friendships transform us, and how we must keep building on that lamp, that light on our path. That's what I can say about Christel.

The Lord is so faithful. We had a friendship of deep fellowship. I can share so many things about Christel. I know what it is to laugh with her. I know what it is to cry with her. I know what it is to dance with her and to share things, even to sleep over in the same bed. I visited her, and she even came to my family one Christmas. I could speak here today about so many of those memories. She was that special friend in my life.

I want to tell the brothers and sisters today—Christel loved her family deeply. Every time I walked into her house, she couldn't wait for me to sit down. She'd say, "Hello, hello, hello! Come in, come in! Sit!" Then she'd say, "Come, I want to take you to the kitchen. What do you think of this colour?" She was someone who loved beautiful things and to create beautiful spaces. "What do you think of this colour in the kitchen? Don't you feel my mother here a little?" And I'd say, "Yes." Oh, her family was always present. Even though she was living there alone, her family was present. She talked about every brother and sister, even if they were living in Cape Town or elsewhere—you were present in that house. She had a deep, deep love for her mom, her dad, and her family.

A selfie with Rochelle Saayman and Christel with a flower in her hair.

Now, I want to speak about the fellowship—the ministry. Christel ministered with me at Avondrus, the old-age home. It was such a joy to lead people to

the Lord. She had that passion—"we must pray now." That was the friendship we had. The scripture I want to quote is that she was "a compassionate person". She had that passionate anointing. Many times you don't understand why a person is the way they are, but then the Lord makes you sit quietly and reveals to you something about that person.

And she had that compassionate anointing for our community—that ability to understand the suffering of others. That's what I can say: even in small ways, she always helped people—giving someone a loaf of bread, helping the gardener. We had a bit of a battle with the children from Esselen Park Secondary School. She never hesitated to cross the street and say, "Boeta, boeta, tuck in your shirt." She was that kind of person. So I want to say today: she had compassion and a deep calling to help. It was a tangible expression of love for those suffering or in need. That's who she was, and she always went the extra mile.

We walked together in Worcester. Dear ones, we walked—Roodewal, Hex Park. I'm originally from the Cape, and I know what it's like there. We'd just get in the car and go. But the Lord brought me to Worcester, and that's how we walked the streets of Worcester together. Then she'd say, "Let's stop here for a bit." Yes, that's who and what Christel was. Many times we shared so much, and she'd say, "Let's just put on a bit of lipstick" or "Let's do our nails." That was the kind of person she was—always sharing her perfume or lipstick with you. Anything she could think of, she shared with you.

That is the person she was. Yes, we had our days when maybe we didn't understand each other, but we always worked it out, because we knew we were sisters in Christ. We needed to work things out, because we aren't perfect people. But I loved her very, very, very dearly. I want to salute her here today for the person she was on this earth.

I hold on to one of her guiding thoughts: Never stop praying for your family. That is who Christel was. The first point of her prayer was always, "Let's pray for my family." So I can take that with me today. I can tell myself, never forget to pray for your family. I loved her dearly.

Ek en Christel het saam begin skool gaan en het baie geheel geraak aan mekaar. Ons het oor en weer gekuier—dit was besonders.

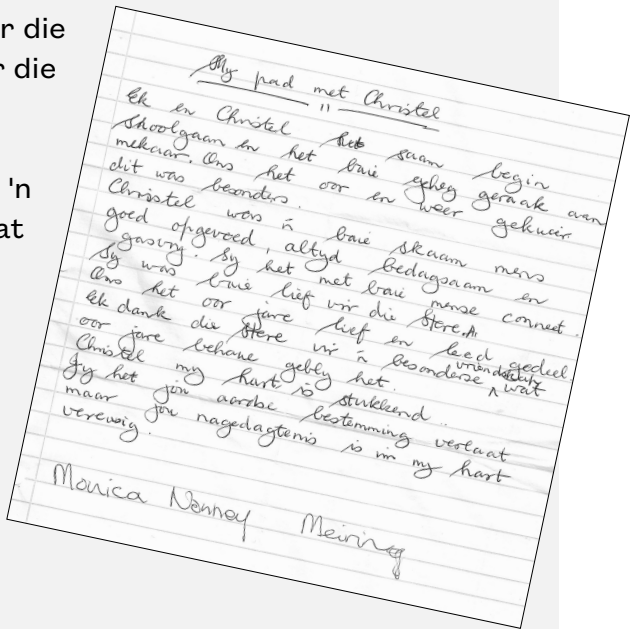
Christel was 'n baie skaam mens, goed opgevoed, altyd bedagsaam en gasvry. Sy het met baie mense *connect*. Sy was baie lief vir die Here. Ons het oor die jare lief en leed gedeel.

Ek dank die Here vir 'n besonderse vriendskap wat oor die jare behoue gebly het.

Christel, my hart is stukkend.

Jy het jou aardse bestemming verlaat, maar jou nagedagtenis is in my hart verewig.

Monica Nonnoy Meiring


My pad met Christel

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Monica Nonnoy Meiring

’n Gebed vir ’n vriendin

Michelle Jass

Abba

Vandag wil ek net vir U sê: Baie dankie. Baie dankie dat U my die voorreg gegee het om ’n kosbare vriendin te kan hê. Baie dankie Abba, dat U my die kans eggen het om kosbare oomblikke met haar te kon hê.

Thank you for the beautiful opportunities that You have granted me to spend time with her in her beautiful garden. When we walked out of her kitchen door, and see the beautiful white roses, green lawn… Thank you that I can have these memories.

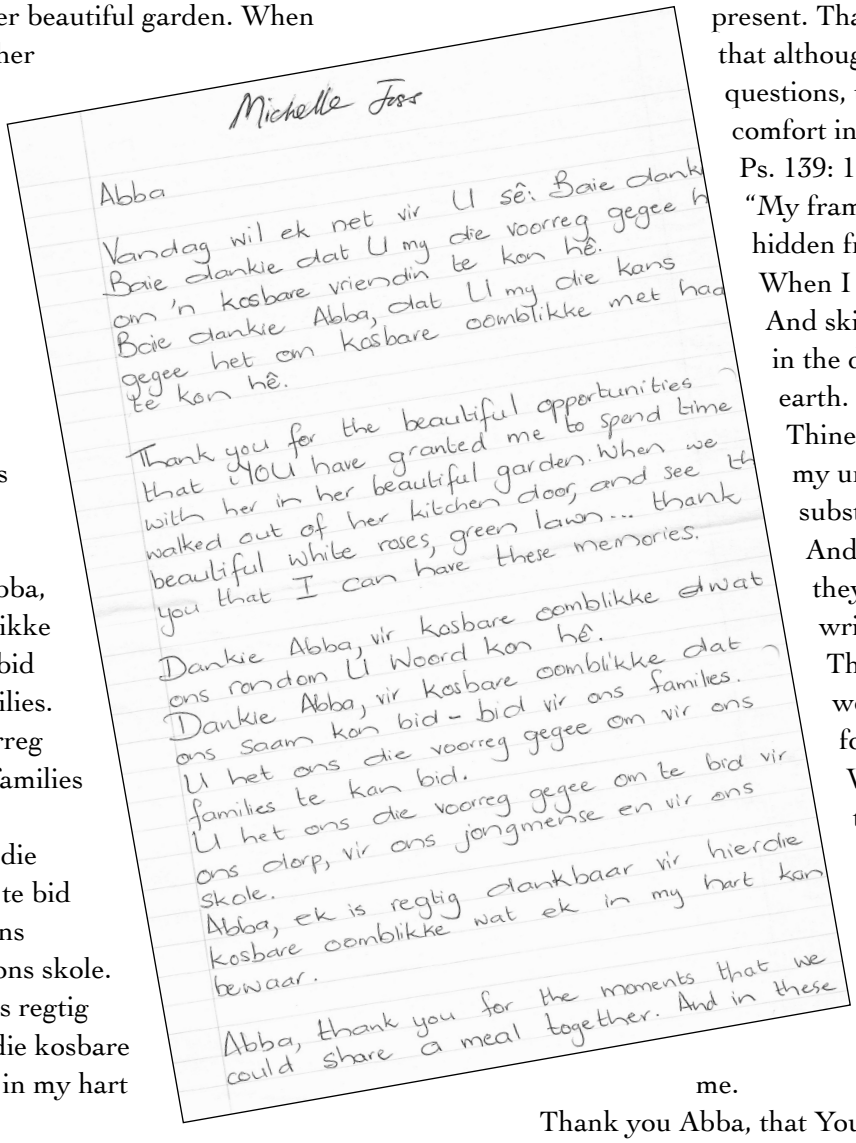
Dankie Abba, vir kosbare oomblikke wat ons rondom U Woord kon hê.

Dankie Abba, vir kosbare oomblikke dat ons saam kan bid — bid vir ons families. U het ons die voorreg gegee om vir ons families te kon bid.

U het ons die voorreg gegee om te bid vir ons dorp, vir ons jongmense en vir ons skole.

Abba, ek is regtig dankbaar vir hierdie kosbare oomblikke wat ek in my hart kan bewaar.

Abba, thank you for the moments that we could share a meal together. And in these moments that we could share joy and laughter together.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Thank you Abba, that You have graciously blessed me to share these moments with her.

Thank you Abba, that I know that nothing happens in our lives, ever catches You unaware. You know all before anything happens.

Thank you Abba, that we can rest in the assurance that You are ever present. Thank you Abba, that although there are questions, that I can find comfort in Your Word, Ps. 139: 15-16:

“My frame was not hidden from Thee,
When I was in secret,
And skilfully wrought in the depths of the earth.
Thine eyes have seen my unformed substance;
And in The book they were all written,
The days that were ordained for me,
When as yet there was not one of them.”

Thank you Abba, for this precious gift that You have given me.

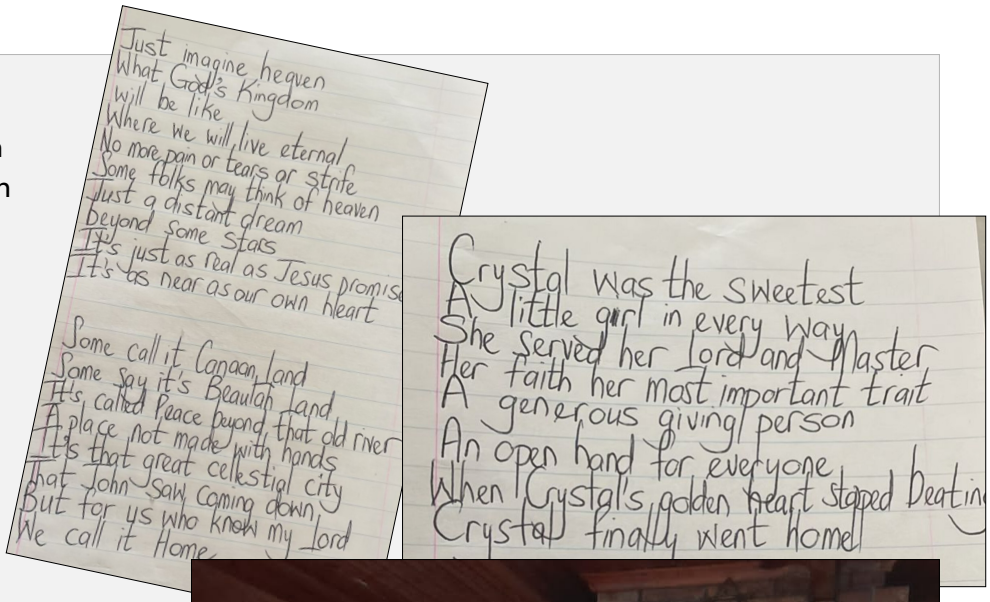
Thank you Abba, that You allowed this gift, Christel Dorothy Joy Willemse, to bring love and joy in my life.

I Honour You and I thank you, Abba.

Thank you. Amen

A song for Christel

Chrystal Jass Pietersen


Just imagine heaven
What God's Kingdom
will be like
Where we will live eternal
No more pain or tears or strife
Some folks may think of heaven
Just a distant dream
Beyond some stars
It's just as real as Jesus promise
It's as near as our own heart
Some call it Canaan land
Some say it's Beaulah land
It's called Peace beyond that old river
A place not made with hands
It's that great celestial city
That John saw coming down
But for us who know my Lord
We call it Home
Crystal was the sweetest
A little girl in every way
She served her Lord and Master
Her faith her most important trait
A generous giving person
An open hand for everyone
When Crystal's golden heart stoped beatin
Crystal finally went home!

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"Dit was 'n absolute voorreg om vir Christel te sing." Chrystal Jass Pietersen het dié lied a capella gesing.

"It was absolutely a privilege to sing for Christel. Chrystal Jass Pietersen sang this song a capella for Christel.

‘Voel jy sterk, voel jy fris, is jy gesond?’

Aaliyah Moosa

As ek een woord moes gebruik om Antie Christel te beskryf is dit... Gelowig. Haar geloof was so standvastig soos ’n rots, nes Ouma Cathy s’n. Daar is niks waaroor en waarvoor sy nie gebid het nie. Wanneer sy ookal gebid het, het sy dit opreg gedoen en dit het werklik uit haar hart en siel gekom. Dis asof sy in ’n ander wereld was wanneer sy gebid het. Sy het standvastig bly glo met haar voete plat op die aarde.

Ek sal haar altyd onthou as ’n stylvolle persoon. Sy het altyd die mooiste klere gedra en altyd mooi gelyk en geruik. Soms het ons geskaterlag oor die rooi wange wat sy gemaak het met lipstiffie. Een ding wat ek altyd sal onthou, is hoe sy ons as kinders gegroet het. Tot vandag kan ek haar stem hoor wanneer sy ons altyd gevra het: "Voel jy sterk, voel jy fris, is jy gesond?” Ons het altyd geskaterlag nadat sy dit vir ons gevra het dan sou ons altyd onder mekaar die woorde herhaal en altyd probeer om in haar aksent te kyk wie doen dit die beste.

Dit is voorwaar goeie herinneringe wat ons vir ewig met ons saam kan dra. Vandag is jy in die Hemel, en ek het geen twyfel daaraan nie. Jou gelowigheid het jou daar gebring.

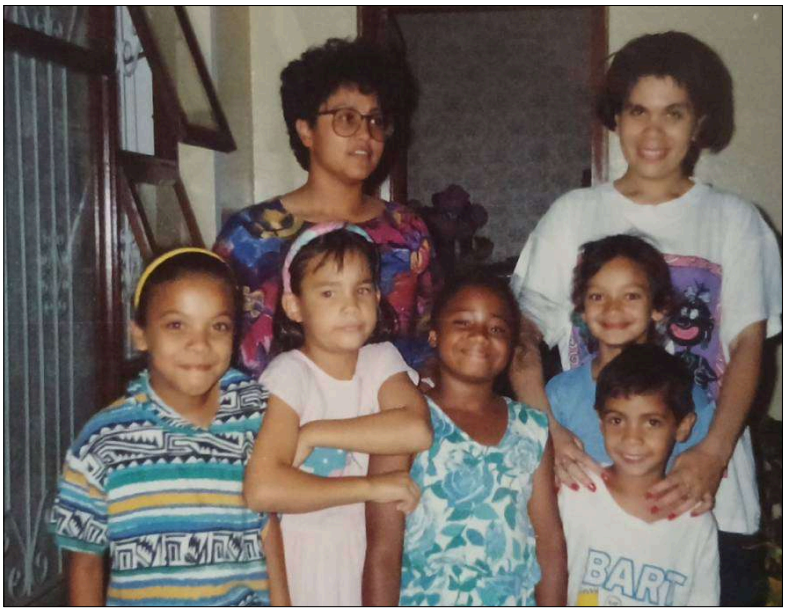
Rus in Vrede, Antie Christel.

If I had to use one word to describe Aunty Christel, it would be… faithful. Her faith was as steadfast as a rock, just like Ouma Cathy’s. There was nothing she didn’t pray about or for. Whenever she prayed, she did it sincerely, and it truly came from her heart and soul. It was as if she were in another world when she prayed. She remained steadfast in her faith, with her feet firmly planted on the ground.

I will always remember her as a stylish person. She always wore the most beautiful clothes and always looked and smelled lovely. Sometimes we laughed out loud about the rosy cheeks she made with lipstick. One thing I will never forget is how she greeted us as children. To this day, I can still hear her voice when she always asked us: “Voel jy sterk, voel jy fris, is jy gesond?” (Do you feel strong, do you feel fresh, are you healthy?) We always burst out laughing after she asked us that, then we would repeat the words among ourselves and always try to imitate her accent to see who did it best.

These are truly good memories that we can carry with us forever. Today, you are in Heaven, and I have no doubt about that. Your faithfulness brought you there.

Rest in Peace, Aunty Christel.



Carol Mohamed en Christel met Antonia Willemse, Marianne Smith, Veronique Capes, Joy Willemse en Jeremy Willemse (Worcester, 1990).

‘She was my big sister’

Farah-Naz Chinasamy

These past few weeks have taught me so much. Life truly is full of surprises. I’ve come to realise how important it is to appreciate and accept people for who they are and what they stand for.

Losing my aunt has felt like losing a part of myself. It’s a journey I now have to face and live with. I’ve been through many challenges in life and have overcome countless obstacles—but her passing hit me in a way I’ve never experienced before.

She wasn’t just my aunt. She was there for me for as long as I can remember. She treated me more like a younger sibling than a niece. We had our ups and downs, just like any siblings would. To me, she wasn’t only my aunt—she was my big sister.

I remember being a young child raised by my grandparents. My aunt would take me everywhere with her—whether it was to visit friends, go shopping, or even for my first haircut. She was a constant presence in my life.

The last time I saw her, I didn’t spend much time with her, and I carry regret for that. But I hold on to the memory of her last prayer for me—her blessings for my life and my family. That prayer touched me so deeply, I felt as if she saw right into my soul.

In recent years, I didn’t see her often, and I wish I had made more time. Still, I always knew how strong her love for family was. As I sat in church, listening to the tributes at her funeral, I was struck by how different the aunt we knew as family was from the person her friends and church community knew. It saddened me to realise that I didn’t know how much she impacted other people’s lives.

She was a courageous woman with so much to give. I am so proud to call her my aunt. Her passing has reminded me how vital it is to cherish and preserve family bonds. Once a link is broken, it cannot be repaired. No one can ever truly fill that gap.

My aunt was deeply spiritual. She was devoted to her church and had an unshakable love for God. There was never a time I saw her when she didn’t ask, “Can I pray for you?” Her prayers were powerful—profound in a way that’s hard to describe.

Christel with the rest of the Willemse family: Back: Carol, Clive, Anton (obscured), Moira, Christel and Paul. Front: Mom, Farah-Naz, Jeremy, Joy and Dad (Worcester, 1990).

Antonia and Farah-Naz, the first grandchildren of Stephen and Cathy Willemse (Worcester, January 1985).

She also had a great love for clothes and fashion. I'll never forget how she greeted me at her door with a big smile, saying, "Hello, hello, kom binne!" Then she'd ask, "Hoe gaan dit met jou, my suster?"

As a child, one of the best memories I have is hearing her say to Jeremy, "Voel jy sterk, voel jy mooi?" We loved it so much we'd repeat her words and laugh together.

My aunt was also strong-willed. Once she believed something, there was no changing her mind. (That trait definitely reminds me of my grandmother!) And when it came to arguing her point—well, she had the willpower for it. Thinking about that makes me smile; it's a family trademark.

In closing, the loss of my aunt has left a deep scar—one that will take time to heal. I'll miss her smile, her conversations, and her prayers. But I know she is at peace, and I believe she is happy where she is now.

Rest well, Aunty Christel. I love you—always and forever.

Christel het nie baie gepraat nie, maar sy sou jou aanspreek vir verkeerde dinge. Sy was godvresend soos sy groot gemaak is, te danke aan haar ouers in wie se voetspore sy gevolg het. Sy was netjes en liefdevol. Ek sal haar altyd in my hart dra en haar nagedagtenis sal my altyd bybly.

Ons het mekaar nooit op die naam genoem nie. Ons het mekaar as "Nig" aangespreek. Haar boodskappies was baie bemoedigend en ons het mekaar geseën vir die dag en die nag wat voorlê. Een van haar laaste boodskappies was soos volg: "Verbly jou in die wete dat God jou nooit sal verlaat of begewe nie. Sy beloftes is 'Ja en Amen'. Lekker slaap, Nig. Shalom."

Rus in vrede, Nig.

Yvonne Simpson (geb. Williams)

Christel didn't talk much, but she would call you out for wrongdoings. She was God-fearing, as she was raised to be, thanks to her parents, in whose footsteps she followed. She was neat and loving. I will always carry her in my heart, and her memory will always stay with me.

We never called each other by name. We addressed each other as "Nig". Her messages were very encouraging, and we blessed each other for the day and night ahead. One of her last messages reads as follows: "Rejoice in the knowledge that God will never leave or forsake you. His promises are 'Yes and Amen.' Sleep well, Nig. Shalom."

Rest in peace, Nig.

Yvonne Simpson (née Williams)

‘Sy was my ouer suster’

Farah-Naz Chinasamy

Die afgelope paar weke het ek soveel geleer. Die lewe is werklik vol verrassings. Ek het besef hoe belangrik dit is om mense te waardeer en te aanvaar vir wie hulle is en waarvoor hulle staan.

Om my antie verloor, het gevoel asof ek ’n deel van myself verloor het. Dis ’n reis wat ek nou moet aanpak en waarmee ek moet leer om mee saamleef. Ek is al deur baie uitdagings in my lewe en het talle struikelblokke oorkom, maar haar heengaan het my op ’n wyse getref soos nog nooit tevore nie.

Sy was nie net my antie nie. Vir solank as wat ek kan onthou, was sy daar. Sy het my eerder soos ’n jonger sussie eerder as ’n susterskind behandel. Ons het ons goeie en minder goeie dae gehad, net soos enige broers en susters. Vir my was sy nie net ’n antie nie, sy was my ouer suster.

Ek onthou hoe ek as kleinkind by my grootouers grootgeword het. My antie het my orals saam met haar geneem, of dit nou was om vriende te besoek, inkopies te doen, of selfs vir my eerste besoek aan ‘n haarkapper. Sy was ’n konsantie teenwoordigheid in my lewe.

Toe ek haar laas gesien het, het ons nie veel tyd deurgebring nie, en ek is spyt daaroor. Maar ek herinner myself aan haar laaste gebed vir my, haar seëning vir my lewe en my gesin. Daardie gebed het my diep geraak; dit het gevoel asof sy reg deur my siel kon sien.

In die afgelope paar jaar het ek haar nie gereeld gesien nie, en ek wens ek het meer tyd gemaak. Tog het ek altyd geweet hoe sterk haar liefde vir haar familie was. Terwyl ek in die kerk gesit en na die huldeblyke by haar begrafnis geluister het, het dit my getref hoe anders die antie was wat ons as familie geken het, in vergelyking met die persoon wat haar vriende en kerkgemeenskap geken het. Dit het my hartseer gemaak om te besef ek het nie geweet hoeveel sy ander mense se lewens geraak het nie.

Sy was ’n dapper vrou met soveel om te gee. Ek is so trots om haar my antie te kon noem. Haar dood het my herinner aan hoe kosbaar en belangrik familiebande is. Wanneer ’n skakel gebreek word, kan dit nooit weer herstel word nie. Niemand kan ooit daardie leemte volkome vul nie.

My antie was diep geestelik. Sy was toegewy aan haar kerk en het ’n onwankelbare liefde vir God gehad. Daar was nooit ’n keer wat ek haar gesien het sonder dat sy gevra het: “Kan ek vir jou bid?” Haar gebede was kragtig, so diep

Christel met Farah-Naz se eerste verjaarsdag (Worcester, Januarie 1985).

en intens, dat dit moeilik is om in woorde vas te vang.

Sy het ook 'n groot liefde vir klere en mode gehad. Ek sal nooit vergeet hoe sy my by die deur met 'n groot glimlag gegroet het nie en gesê het: "Hello, hello, kom binne!" Daarna sou sy vra: "Hoe gaan dit met jou, my suster?"

As kind is een van my kosbaarste herinneringe hoe sy vir Jeremy gesê het: "Voel jy sterk, voel jy mooi?" Ons het dit so baie geniet dat ons haar woorde herhaal en saam daaroor gelag het.

My antie was ook baie hardkoppig. As sy iets geglo het, was daar geen manier om haar van stryk te bring nie. (Daardie eienskap herinner my beslis aan my ouma!) En as dit by 'n argument kom—wel, sy het die deursettingsvermoë gehad. Om daaraan te dink, laat my glimlag. Dis beslis 'n familietrek.

Ten slotte, die verlies van my antie het 'n diep litteken agtergelaat, een wat 'n tydjie sal neem om te genees. Ek gaan haar glimlag, haar gesprekke en haar gebede mis. Maar ek weet sy rus in vrede, en ek glo sy is gelukkig waar sy nou is.

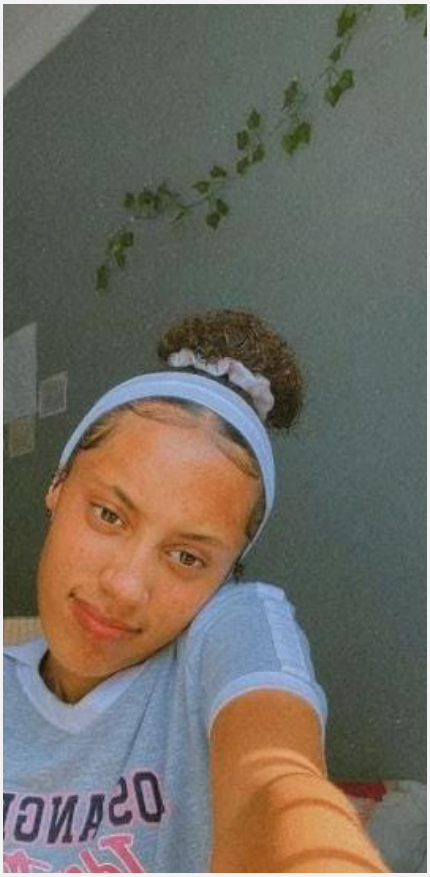
Rus sag, Antie Christel. Ek is lief vir jou—altyd en vir ewig.

Ek, **BRONWIN DAVIDS**, was baie geheg aan ant Christel, want sy was altyd die een wat my ge-*motivate* het en altyd vir my herinner dat ek spesiaal en meer werd is. Sy was letterlik soos 'n tweede ma vir my. Ek het baie opgekyk na haar. Ek het selfs 'n bond met haar gebou soos 'n liefde van 'n ma en kind wat ek letterlik nie geweet het waarvandaan dit gekom het nie.

Sy het elke keer as sy na my ouma toe gekom het vir my gesê ek moet baie hard leer om iets van my lewe te maak. Daarvoor was ek baie dankbaar, want ek het nogal so persoon nodig gehad. Daarom werk ek nog elke dag aan wat my ant Christel vir my gesê het.

Joh, as ek so dink dan was my ant Christel 'n baie liefdevolle mens en baie saggeaard, maar met 'n persoonlikheid wat baie harte gewen het. Sy was letterlik altyd daar vir my in my donker tye. Sy het my altyd van die Here geleer, dat dit belangrik is om die Here te dien. As ek net so aan haar mooi smile en gesig dink, dan loop my trane.

Ek mis haar letterlik nog elke dag en ek is nog steeds ongelooflik lief vir my ant Christel. Ek sal haar nooit vergeet nie.



I, **BRONWIN DAVIDS**, was very close to Aunt Christel because she was always the one who motivated me and constantly reminded me that I was special and worth so much more. She was literally like a second mother to me. I looked up to her a lot. I even built a bond with her like the love between a mother and child—something I honestly didn't even know where it came from.

Every time she came to visit my grandmother, she would tell me to study hard so that I could make something of my life. I was very grateful for that because I really needed someone like her. That's why I still work every day on what Aunt Christel told me.

Joh, when I think about it, my Aunt Christel was such a loving person and very gentle, but with a personality that won many hearts. She was literally always there for me in my darkest times. She always taught me about the Lord and told me how important it is to serve Him. Just thinking about her beautiful smile and face brings tears to my eyes.

I still miss her every single day, and I still love my Aunt Christel so much. I will never forget her.

Bronwin

Our aunt Christel

Carryn Willemse and Catelin Willemse

Aunty Christel was a great aunt who was a personable and kind person, who more than often, brought a sense of joy to those around her. Many spoke of her generosity and her relationship with the Lord. She showed this by always praying for people and wishing them well before her departure.

She visited us often during, or before, important events in our lives. She'd usually attract the attention of my two dogs, Ben and Scotty, and would end up laughing her heart out. Overall, I'd say she was a real ray of sunshine to those who she encountered and always tried her best efforts to lift the spirits of those around her.

Ant Christel was 'n wonderlike tannie — 'n hartlike en vriendelike mens wat dikwels vreugde gebring het aan diegene rondom haar. Baie mense het van haar vrygewigheid en haar verhouding met die Here gepraat. Sy het dit gewys deur altyd vir mense te bid en hulle die beste toe te wens voordat sy vertrek het.

Sy het ons gereeld besoek tydens, of net voor, belangrike geleenthede in ons lewens. Gewoonlik het sy dadelik die aandag van my twee honde, Ben en Scotty, getrek — en dan het sy uit haar maag uit gelag. Algeheel sou ek sê sy was 'n ware sonstraal vir almal wat haar pad gekruis het, en sy het altyd haar bes probeer om die gemoed van ander te lig.

— Carryn Willemse

Aunty Christel was someone who never held back when it came to following her heart. I remember how, whenever Carryn and I visited, she'd light up as she shared stories — tales from her youth, her hopes for the future. Some days, she'd take us back to her childhood; other days, she'd dream out loud about what still lay ahead. When it was time to leave, she never let us go empty-handed — jewellery, clothes, or a little something for the road. What I loved most about her was her generous spirit; gifting was her way of showing how much you mattered, how deeply she cared. I'll miss her warmth, her stories, her unwavering love for the people in her life.

Ant Christel het nooit gehuiwer om haar hart te volg nie. Ek onthou hoe sy altyd opgehelder het wanneer Carryn en ek haar besoek het — sy't stories gedeel, staaltjies uit haar jeug en drome oor die toekoms. Sommige dae het sy ons teruggeneem na haar kinderdae; ander dae het sy hardop gedroom oor wat nog voorlê. Wanneer dit tyd was om te groet, het sy ons nooit met leë hande laat gaan nie — juwele, klere, of iets kleins vir die pad. Wat ek die meeste van haar gehou het, was haar vrygewige gees; om te gee was haar manier om te wys hoeveel jy vir haar beteken het, hoe diep sy omgegee het. Ek gaan haar warmte mis, haar stories, en haar onwankelbare liefde vir die mense in haar lewe.

— Catelin Willemse

Ons pad op pad na die berg

Maryann Davids

Ek worstel nog met die dood, met die heengaan van Christel. Dit gaan nog *tough* aan my kant om die nuus te vat soos ons dit gekry het, maar ons moet dit so aanvaar. Ons kan niks doen nie, nè. Die Here moet my maar dra en krag gee.

Ek het vir Christel ontmoet, lieflike kind, by Lifestyle-kerk waar sy die Here gedien het. Toe is ons uit mekaar uit, maar ná haar ma se sterfte het ek haar kom soek, maar toe kry ek nie vir haar nie. Op 'n dag in 2020 het die Here my beopdrag toe ek en 'n ander suster berg toe is. Ons loop toe al 'n jaar en 'n half berg, 2019 het ons begin. Op 'n oggend is ons op pad berg toe, en ek hoor duidelik 'n stem wat my naam roep.

Maryann Davids, (Worcester, 2025).

Ek sê vir die suster wat by my is, "Hier roep iemand vir my." Maar dis uit 'n bos uit. Nou kan ek nie verstaan nie, wie roep na my, ons twee is dan alleen hier. Toe sê vir my, "Suster Maryann, dit moet die Here wees." Kyk, en terwyl ons daarbo besig is om te bid, gee die Here my Christel se hele gesig: ek moet daai spesifieke dag by Christel uitkom. Daai dag, toe stap ek daar van die berg af. Sy sê nog, "Ons gaan nie vir Christel kry nie, want dis einde van die maand." Ek sê, "Man, as die Here my stuur, dan gaan die Here vir haar by die huis hou."

En ek is af daai middag—vuurwarm daai dag—is ek af na Christel toe. Toe ek by haar kom, is sy net by die hekkie, sy's op pad iewers, dorp toe of iets. Ek sê vir haar, "Suster Christel, ek is nou na jou toe gestuur." Ek sê vir haar, "Die Here het my nou na jou toe gestuur." En sy draai daar om en sê, dis hoekom sy nie by die deur kon uitgekom het nie, want dan kom sy uit, dan gaan sy weer terug, dan kom sy uit, dan gaan sy weer terug, sy kom nie dat sy in die taxi kom nie, want sy sou taxi geklim het.

Sy draai daar saam met my om. Daar het ek en Christel se pad begin dat ons saamgestap het. Daai dag toe sê die Here ek moet vir haar kom sê, "Die voël met die verminkte vlerk, haar vlerk herstel die Here." Toe sit sy met trane in haar oë terwyl ek met haar deel, en ons het begin te bid. Daarna het ons verhouding begin. Ek het baie by haar gekom en ons het begin saambid daar by die huis. So het ons die pad begin stap tot die laatste uur en oomblik. Haar dood is só hard. Dan kuier sy by my, dan kuier ek by haar. Baie nagte het ons deurnag gebid.

So het ons baie mense geontmoet daar op die berg. Ons twee was daar op 'n Saterdagoggend, halfsewe daai oggend toe is ek en sy daar op die berg. Daai oggend toe kom daar 'n ou blanke vrou en 'n blanke man en ek en sy sit en bid toe daar. Die vrou kom direk na ons toe, en die vrou sê, ja, maar sy wil nou vir ons bid. En daai vrou het nou vir ons twee nou gebid. Mense, toe sê ek vir Christel, dis seker waarvoor ons hiernatoe moes gekom het.

"So het ek en sy die pad gestap. Ek en sy het mekaar nog laas gesien, ek dink nou voor haar sterfte, seker so twee of drie weke gelede toe sy en suster Lien by mekaar was. Ek kon toe nou nie meer so elke dag daar by haar gaan kuier nie, elke naweek by haar gaan kuier nie.

Toe ek vir Christel ontmoet, was sy nie meer die Christel soos wat ek gelos het nie. Sy het ge-*sign* vir die Here. Toe was sy en suster Lien bymekaar, maar toe het ek 'n bietjie met haar ge-*deal*, "Ek kom weer, ons gaan weer berg toe."

Maar ek het mos nou klein kinders na wie ek kyk wat ek moet oppas. Sy het baie met my geraas oor die kinders, dat hulle ma hulle in die crèche sit, want ek en sy kom nie by mekaar nie, so lekker bymekaar soos wat dit was in die begin nie. Sy het in my huis gekom, dan kom spreek sy my kinders aan, so groot en oud hulle soos is (hulle het ook al kinders), maar dan het sy hulle aangespreek.

Sy was vir my soos 'n dogter wat altyd geluister het, as ek met haar praat soos 'n ma. Ek sal haar altyd onthou, ek sal altyd daai mooi van haar onthou, daai kinderlike, daai leerbare gees, en daai gou wees om vir vergifnis te vra. Ek het so baie by haar geleer, som keer as ek 'n bietjie sterk na haar deurgekom het, dan praat ek met haar, streng soos 'n ma sal streng praat, dan sal sy altyd soos 'n kind wees, "Ja, vergewe my, dáár het ek verkeerd gedoen, en dáár het ek dít gedoen."

Aan die ander kant was sy my geestelike suster, na wie toe ek kan gaan as ek bietjie probleme het met wie ek kan gesels. Dan bid ons daaroor. As sy nou 'n probleem het, dan bid ons nou weer daarvoor. Ons kan deel met mekaar wat ons het, fisieke goeters en so. Ek sit hier nog met rokkies en goed wat sy vir my gegee het. Sy het nog laas 'n phonetjie vir my gegee—uit haar hart uit Here.

Sy was my gebedsmaat van 2020 af. Ek weet nie waar ek so 'n gebedsmaat gaan kry nie. Die Here moet regtig vir my 'n gebedsmaat stuur. Ek moet dit nou regtig 'n saak van gebed maak. Ek sal nie nou vir Christel kry nie, maar vertrou dat die Here 'n waaragtige een met opregtheid, met eerlikheid na my toe sal stuur.

Christel was mos 'n baie pragtige mens in die Here. Sy is eintlik sag en baie mense het haar misbruik uit haar goedheid. Sy was te goed gewees vir mense. Sy't so baie mense vertrou, sy't so almal vertrou. Ek het baie met haar daarvoor vasgesit, dan sê ek, "Christel, mens kan almal lief hê, maar jy kan nie almal vertrou nie, die Bybel sê so. Onthou jy bly alleen, jy kan nie so almal vertrou om in te laat en dié nie." Dis nou Christel, haar hart was oop gewees vir almal, maar al was dit ook wie, al was dit ook nou wat, haar hart het sy oopgemaak.

Ek gaan haar so baie mis, ek mis haar alreeds. Maar nou ja, dit moet wees soos die Here dit wil hê. Ek kan nie oor die Here se wil nie. Maar sy was 'n biddende, 'n biddende godsvrou.

Christel het 'n lewende, lewende verhouding met die Here gehad, baie sag, baie kinderlik, baie liefdevol. Ek sal haar altyd so onthou en daai pragtige *smile*. Die aand voor die roudiens,

Christel (Worcester, 1989).

daar by die huis, toe droom ek van haar. Maar nou ja, sy is by Jesus, ek glo. Sy is daar by die Here, en ek moet net volhard en haar tog eendag weer te sien. Sy het 'n ware, ware verhouding met die Here gehad. So het ek vir Marial ook daar ontmoet. Christel het baie gesê ons moet bid vir Marial, sy verlang na Marial. Só het ons baie gebid, sy was die *intercessor* van die Willemses, regtigwaar, want as ons begin bid, dan sê sy, "Sy bid vir Hein, bid vir Clive, bid vir Anton, daar is nog 'n broer wat sy die naam van genoem het... die prokureur ken ek nou. Dié het ek al geontmoet.

Wat julle het as Willemse-kinders, daai is van julle voorgeslag. Daai is dit wat mamma en pappa gekweek het. Dit is baie pragtig. Dit is baie mooi. Christel was totaal, totaal uitgekies van die Here, tussen julle almal Willemse. Nie dat die Here vir julle lief het nie of julle nie uitgekies is nie—elkeen het sy spesifieke doel waarvoor julle op die aarde is—maar Christel was besonders.

Sy was totaal vir die Here eenkant gesit gewees. Al wat sy moes gedoen het, is om haar knieë te wees vir die familie-kinders. Dis die eerste ding wat sy gesê het, ons moet bid vir die familie, suster Maryann. Altyd, as daar gebid word, dan is dit my familie, my familie wat ons moet voor bid.

Sy het regtig die Here se hart gehad, want sy het 'n hart vir mense gehad, maak nie maak wie hulle is nie.

Our path up the mountain

Maryann Davids

I'm still struggling with her death, with the passing of Christel. It's still tough on my side to accept the news as we received it, but we have to accept it that way. There's nothing we can do, right? The Lord must carry me and give me strength.

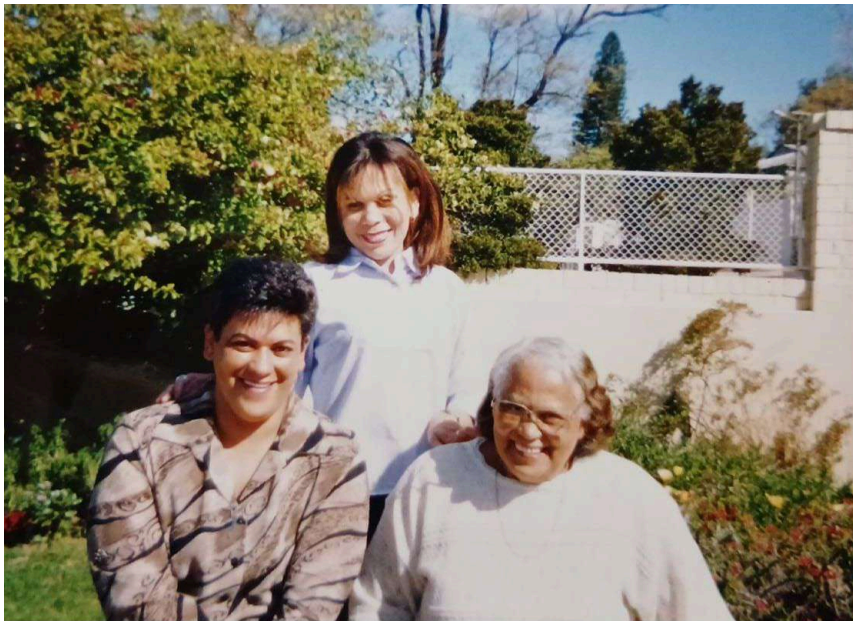
I met Christel—a lovely child—at Lifestyle Church, where she served the Lord. Then we lost touch, but after her mother passed away, I went looking for her, but I didn't find her. One day in 2020, the Lord instructed me while another sister and I were on our way to the mountain. We'd been going to the mountain for a year and a half—we started in 2019. One morning, on our way to the mountain, I clearly heard a voice calling my name.

I said to the sister with me, "Someone is calling me." But it came from a bush. Now I couldn't understand it—who's calling me? It's just the two of us here. Then she said, "Sister Maryann, it must be the Lord." And while we were up there praying, the Lord showed me Christel's whole face: I had to go to Christel that very day. That day, I walked down from the mountain. She said, "We're not going to find Christel because it's the end of the month." I said, "If the Lord sends me, then the Lord will keep her at home."

And that afternoon I went down—it was blazing hot—to Christel. When I arrived, she was right there at the gate, on her way somewhere, to town or something. I said to her, "Sister Christel, I've been sent to you." I said, "The Lord has sent me to you." And she turned around and said that's why she couldn't get out the door—every time she went out, she came back in, again and again. She couldn't manage to get to the taxi—she was supposed to take a taxi.

She turned back with me. That was the beginning of the journey that Christel and I walked together. That day the Lord told me to tell her, "The bird with the broken wing—the Lord is restoring her wing." She had tears in her eyes as I shared that with her, and we began to pray. That's when our relationship began. I visited her often, and we started praying together at her home. That's how we started walking the path until the very last hour and moment. Her death is so hard. She would come visit me, and I'd go visit her. Many nights we prayed through the night.

We met many people on the mountain. One Saturday morning, 6:30 a.m., Christel and I were up on the mountain. That morning, an elderly white woman and man came up, and while we were sitting and



Christel and Marial with their mother (Wellington, 2000).

praying, the woman came directly to us and said she wanted to pray for us. And that woman prayed for both of us. I said to Christel, "This must be why we came up here."

That's how we walked the journey together. The last time I saw her, I think, was two or three weeks before her passing, when she and Sister Lien were together. I could no longer visit her every day or every weekend like before. When I met Christel again, she wasn't the same Christel I had last seen. She had committed herself to the Lord. At that time, she was with Sister Lien, but I spoke to her a bit, "I'm coming again, we're going back to the mountain."

But I now have small children I look after. She often scolded me about the children—that their mother should put them in crèche—because she and I no longer spent as much time together like in the beginning. She would come to my house and even correct my children—grown as they are (some of them already have kids)—but she would still speak to them.

She was like a daughter to me who always listened when I spoke to her like a mother. I will always remember her—I will always remember that beauty in her, that childlike, teachable spirit, and how quick she was to ask for forgiveness. I learned so much from her. Sometimes when I came down a bit hard on her, I'd speak to her, as a mother would, and she'd always be like a child: "Yes, forgive me, there I was wrong, and there I did that."

On the other hand, she was my spiritual sister—someone I could go to when I had problems and talk to. Then we'd pray about it. And if she had a problem, we'd pray about that too. We shared everything with each other, even physical things. I still have dresses and things she gave me. She even gave me a little phone—the last one—from her heart, dear Lord.

She was my prayer partner since 2020. I don't know where I'll find another prayer partner like that. The Lord will really have to send me one. I must now truly make it a matter of prayer. I won't find another Christel, but I trust the Lord will send someone sincere, honest, and genuine.

Christel was a beautiful person in the Lord. She was soft-hearted, and many people took advantage of her kindness.

She was too good to people. She trusted so many, trusted everyone. I often had words with her about it. I'd say, "Christel, you can love everyone, but you can't trust everyone—the Bible says so. Remember, you live alone—you can't trust everyone and just let them in." That was Christel—her heart was open to everyone, no matter who or what they were, she opened her heart.

I'm going to miss her so much—I already miss her. But well, it has to be as the Lord wills. I can't go against the Lord's will. But she was a praying, godly woman.

Christel had a living, living relationship with the Lord—so soft, so childlike, so loving. I'll always remember her like that—and that beautiful smile. The night before the memorial service, there at the house, I dreamt of her. But well, she's with Jesus, I believe. She's with the Lord, and I just have to persevere so that I can see her again one day. She had a true, true relationship with the Lord.

That's also how I met Marial. Christel often said we must pray for Marial—she longed for Marial. We prayed a lot—she was the intercessor of the Willemses, truly. When we started to pray, she'd say, "Pray for Hein, pray for Clive, pray for Anton," and there was another brother whose name she mentioned…I know the lawyer—him I've met.

What you Willemse children have—that comes from your ancestors. That's what your mom and dad cultivated. It's very beautiful. Christel was totally, totally chosen by the Lord among you all, the Willemses. Not that the Lord doesn't love you or hasn't chosen you—each of you has a specific purpose for being on this earth—but Christel was special.

She was completely set apart for the Lord. The only thing she had to do was bend her knees for the family children. That was the first thing she said: "We must pray for the family, Sister Maryann." Always, when there was prayer, it was for her family—her family we must pray for.

She truly had the heart of the Lord, because she had a heart for people—no matter who they were.

’n Lewe van ware vriendskap

Karen Gordon

Met die heengaan van Christel het ek nie net 'n vriendin verloor nie, maar 'n vrou wie se lewe 'n sagte, maar diep impak op dié rondom haar gehad het. In stilte, met 'n rustige teenwoordigheid en 'n liefdevolle hart, het sy 'n nalatenskap van opregtheid, geloof en vriendskap nagelaat wat ons vir altyd sal koester.

My reis met Christel het meer as vyftig jaar gelede begin, toe ek as tienjarige aan haar en haar suster Marial voorgestel is. Ons pa’s het saam by die poskantoor gewerk, en daardie ontmoeting sou uitloop op een van die kosbaarste verhoudings van my lewe. Sedert daardie dag was sy nie net 'n vriendin nie, sy was vir vyf dekades 'n konstante teenwoordigheid in my lewe.

Christel met Marial, Blanche Wehr en Michelle Fouldien (Worcester, 1980).

Ons was deel van 'n hegte groep vriendinne, vyf jong meisies wat deur die lewe se stadiums saamgegroei het. In ons tienerjare en jong volwasse lewe was ons feitlik elke dag saam. Ons het saamgelag, saamgehuil, saamgegroei. Soos die jare verbygegaan het, het ons bande net sterker geraak. Sy was my strooimeisie en later 'n steunpilaar tydens die geboorte van elkeen van my kinders. In goeie en slegte tye kon ek altyd op haar staatmaak, sonder oordeel, sonder voorbehoud.

Wat Christel besonders gemaak het, was haar diep geloof en nederigheid. Sy het haar spiritualiteit nie uitgestal nie, maar eerder geleef, op die manier waarop sy mense behandel het, haar lojaliteit, haar sagtheid, en haar vermoë om altyd 'n glimlag te gee, selfs in moeilike tye. Sy was nie 'n persoon vir groot vertoon nie, maar eerder 'n vrou van stille krag.

En ja, sy het 'n liefde vir koek en lekkernye gehad, iets wat elke saamkuier net nóg meer spesiaal gemaak het! Maar haar grootste “soetigheid” was haar hart: sag, rein, en opreg.

Haar afwesigheid laat 'n groot leemte in my lewe, maar haar herinnering sal nooit vervaag nie. Ek mis haar teenwoordigheid, haar stem, haar raad en haar rustige geaardheid. Sy het my geleer hoe om met waardigheid lief te hê, en met geloof deur moeilike tye te beweeg.

Vir almal wat haar geken het: Mag ons vertroosting vind in die feit dat Christel 'n betekenisvolle lewe geleef het. Sy het lig gebring waar daar donkerte was, rus gebring waar daar onrustigheid was. Mag haar voorbeeld ons aanmoedig om met meer deernis te leef, meer opreg te luister, en meer getrou aan ons waardes te wees.

Christel, jy was 'n gawe. Jou nalatenskap leef voort in elke hart wat jy aangeraak het.

Dankie vir jou voetspore in my lewe.

Christel, you were a gift

Karen Gordon

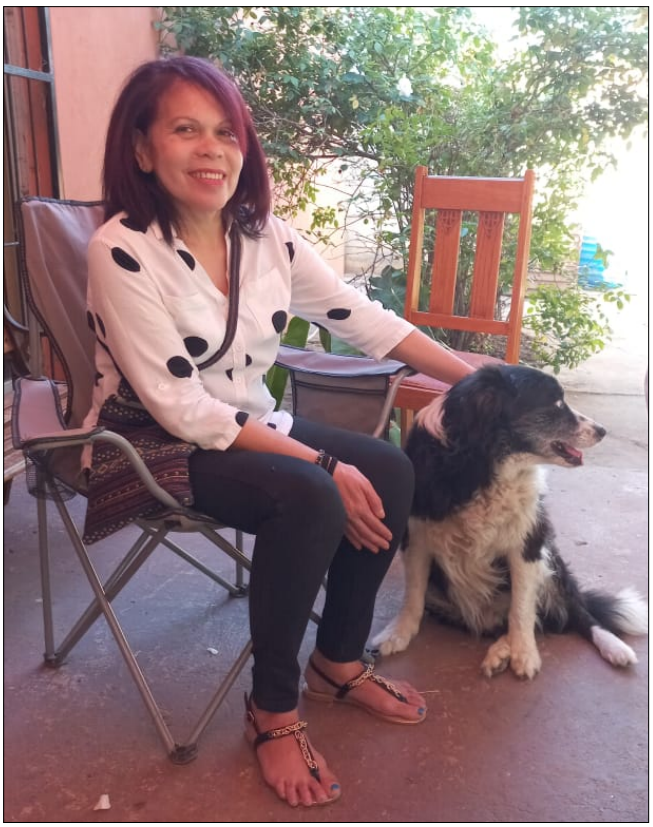
With Christel's passing, I didn't just lose a friend—I lost a woman whose life left a gentle but profound impact on those around her. In quietness, with a calm presence and a loving heart, she left behind a legacy of sincerity, faith, and friendship that we will treasure forever.

My journey with Christel began more than fifty years ago, when I, as a ten-year-old, was introduced to her and her sister Marial. Our fathers worked together at the Post Office, and that meeting would blossom into one of the most precious relationships of my life. From that day on, she wasn't just a friend—she was a constant presence in my life for five decades.

We were part of a close-knit group of friends, five young girls who grew through all of life's stages together. In our teenage years and early adulthood, we were practically inseparable. We laughed together, cried together, grew together. As the years passed, our bond only deepened. She was my bridesmaid and later a pillar of support through the birth of each of my children. In both good and difficult times, I could always count on her, without judgment, without hesitation.

What made Christel truly special was her deep faith and humility. She didn't display her spirituality; it was simply who she was. It lived in how she treated people, her loyalty, her gentleness, and her ability to always offer a smile, even in hard times. She was never one for grand gestures, but rather a woman of quiet strength.

And yes, she had a love for cake and sweet treats, something that made every get-together even more special! But her greatest "sweetness" was her heart: soft, pure, and sincere.



Christel with Scotty (Worcester, 2020).

Her absence leaves a great void in my life, but her memory will never fade. I miss her presence, her voice, her wisdom, and her calm nature. She taught me how to love with dignity and how to walk through tough times with faith.

To everyone who knew her: May we find comfort in knowing that Christel lived a meaningful life. She brought light where there was darkness, peace where there was restlessness. May her example inspire us to live with more compassion, to listen more sincerely, and to stay true to our values.

Christel, you were a gift. Your legacy lives on in every heart you touched.

Thank you for your footprints in my life.

‘Soos dou op die oggendgras’

Ronald Campher

O Hein Willemse en familie,
In hierdie vallei van trane en hartseer,
brei ek my diepste meegevoel vir die verlies van jou geliefde suster, Christel, aan julle uit.

In 'n wêreld waar die oggend net met vreugde en lag blyk te breek, is haar skielike vertrek 'n swaar wolk wat skaduwees op julle harte gooi.

In die lewensdoek van die bestaan is elke lewe 'n draad, lewendig en uniek. Christel, in haar 61 jaar, het helder kleure in julle familie se bestaanstof gewerk — elke herinnering 'n vreugdevolle kleur, elke oomblik 'n gekoesterde merk van skoonheid.

Alhoewel die winde van die noodlot haar lewensdraad te gou en skielik weggesny het, bly die lig wat sy in julle lewens gebring het, nog steeds, fluisterend van die liefde wat nooit vervaag nie.

Treur, liewe vriende, want die diepte van die liefde wat ons voel, is 'n testament vir die verband wat julle gedeel het. Maar weet dat Christel se gees in julle hartseer bly, soos glinsterende dou op die oggendgras — in elke gekoesterde herinnering, en elke gedeelde lag.

Open julle harte en gemoedere vir die sagte omhelsing van genesing, want liefde bly bestaan buite die sluier van hierdie wêreld. In julle oomblikke van stil refleksie, voel haar teenwoordigheid in die stories wat julle vertel en die lag wat julle deel.

Hartseer kan soos 'n sterk gety kom, maar onthou dat die see altyd terugkeer na sy rustige kus. Mag die herinneringe van Christel julle omvou, mag die liefde wat julle met haar gedeel het, julle vertroos, en mag julle krag in mekaar vind terwyl julle hierdie diepgaande reis van verlies navigeer.

Hou haar lig in julle harte saam, want sy sal langs julle loop in elke oomblik van skoonheid wat voorlê.

Met diepe omgee.

Oh Hein Willemse and family,
In this valley of tears and sorrow, I extend my deepest condolences to you for the loss of your beloved sister, Christel.

In a world where the morning seems to break only with joy and laughter, her sudden passing is a heavy cloud casting shadows upon your hearts.

In the tapestry of existence, every life is a thread — vibrant and unique. Christel, in her 61 years, wove bright colours into the fabric of your family’s being — each memory a joyful hue, each moment a cherished mark of beauty.

Although the winds of fate have cut her thread too soon and suddenly, the light she brought into your lives still remains, whispering of a love that never fades.

Mourn, dear friends, for the depth of the love we feel is a testament to the bond you shared. But know that Christel’s spirit lives on in your sorrow, like glistening dew on morning grass — in every treasured memory and every shared laugh.

Open your hearts and minds to the gentle embrace of healing, for love endures beyond the veil of this world. In your quiet moments of reflection, feel her presence in the stories you tell and the laughter you share.

Grief may come like a powerful tide, but remember that the sea always returns to its calm shore. May the memories of Christel surround you, may the love you shared with her comfort you, and may you find strength in one another as you navigate this profound journey of loss.

Keep her light in your hearts, for she will walk beside you in every moment of beauty that lies ahead.

With deep regard.

’n Onverwagte dood

Hein Willemse

Memento mori, memento vivere
“Onthou om te sterwe, onthou om te lewe”

I

Die boodskap het gekom terwyl ons op pad terug van Knysna na Kleinkrantz is. Teen die verwagting in rep RSG se middagnuus-program geen woord van verdere reaksies op die dood van Pous Franciskus wat die vorige dag, Paasmaan-dag, oorlede is nie. Ek hoor die foon, maar tel nie op nie. Dis Marial. Uit gewoonte antwoord ek nie terwyl ek bestuur nie, maar ek skakel altyd later terug. 'n Halfuur later is daar 'n tweede oproep. Dis Paul wat bel, as dit dringend is, sal hy in elk geval opvolg. Kort daarna lui die foon weer. Dis Paul. Ek gee die foon vir Carol, dit lyk na 'n noodgeval. “Hy wil met jou praat,” sy probeer die telefoon teen my oor druk, maar ek skerm dit weg.

“Ek sal hom terugbel, sodra ons by die huis kom.”

“Sê hy moet aftrek, dis dringend,” hoor ek hom sê. Ek is op 'n lang draai op die N2 tussen die Rheenendal- en Buffelsbaai-afdraaipaaie en daar is nie onmiddellik 'n plek om af te trek nie. Dit neem 'n hele paar sekondes in die druk verkeer voor ek naby die afdraand na Buffelsdraai 'n veilige plek kry om af te trek.

“Ja, Paul?”

“Ek het slegte nuus. Dit lyk of Christel gesterf het.”

“Wat?!”

“Ja, Marial het my 'n rukkie gelede gebel. Sy en 'n vriendin van Christel het haar in die huis aangetref.” Die vriendin op soek na Christel kon haar nie opgeklop kry nie, en Marial het haar ook nie die oggend nie op die werf gewaar nie. Alles is dig in die huis. Uiteindelik kry hulle die skuifdeur van haar kamer oopgestoot en trek die gordyne weg. Deur die tralies sien hulle haar in haar nagklere met haar gesig in die kussings, haar hande styf geklem. “Ons het die polisie en die ondernemer gebel.” Paul klink nog olik, hy is letterlik uit ’n weeklange siekbed opgeroep.

“Wat is dit,” vra Carol, nadat ek afgelui het. Sy hoor die nuus met verbasing aan. Ons ry in stilte verder. Terug by die huis bel ek Paul terug. Hulle wag steeds op die ondernemer.

“Is julle seker sy’s dood,” vra ek.

Daar was aarseling in sy eerste reaksie; dié keer is sy antwoord sonder huiwering. “Sy’s dood en yskoud. Dit lyk of rigor mortis al ingetree het.” Paul wonder hardop of daar nie 'n onnatuurlike oorsaak vir haar dood is nie. “Die polisie was nog nie hier nie.”

Vir die volgende paar uur hanteer ons familielede ons skok en ontsteltenis op uiteenlopende maniere. Kon sy natuurlik gesterf het, was daar misdaad betrokke? Nee, daar was geen teken van betreding nie, die huis was dig, geen teken van inbraak nie, alles wat gesluit. Maar tog, dit kan tog nie wees nie, sy was dan fiks, skraal en gesond met geen teken van skete nie. . .

Christel met haar ma Cathy, haar suster Marial en broers Paul, Hein, Anton en Clive (Wellington, 2000).

Christel met haar ma Cathy, haar suster Marial en skoonsusters Carol (links voor) en Moira, Claudine en Melanie (Wellington, 2000).

In ons gesprekke oor die volgende paar uur kristalliseer net een moontlike oorsaak: haar epilepsie. Maar sy het dan jare laas 'n aanval gehad, redeneer sommige, tog bly dit die enigste moontlike verklaring vir ons, die leke wat haar geken het. Sy moes 'n intense epileptiese aanval gehad het, wat haar toe vuiste verklaar.

Dae later speur ek op die internet die ses fases van rigor mortis na en daaruit is dit duidelik dat toe Marial en Franzail die skuifdeur oopgeforseer het, Christel ten minste agt uur vroeër gesterf het. Dis waarskynliker dat sy vóór middernag dood is. 'n Hoofstuk oor die Willemse-voorgeskiedenis wat ek op ons WhatsApp-familiegroep geplaas het, het sy nege minute voor sewe op 21 April oopgemaak en 'n paar minute later om 7:03 nm. haar allerlaaste boodskap gestuur: "Goeienaand Hein, geruste nagrus van Vrede, gesondheid en liefde. Gods rykste seëninge, Hein vir jou en Carol. Shalom." Haar boodskap was dié dag vroeër as gewoonlik, in die verlede het sy soms so laat as tienuur haar gebruiklike groet gestuur. Alles in ag genome, is ek seker dat sy in die laataand van Paasmaandag gesterf het.

Ons knip ons vakansie in die Suid-Kaap kort en reis die 500 km terug. Die dag ná ons terugkeer ontmoet ek Paul by die kliniek op die terrein van Worcester Hospitaal. Hy voel steeds olik met 'n effense lighoofdigheid en 'n drukking agter sy oë—sy siekte het 'n nadraai. Ons is egter nie daar om sy gesondheid nie, maar om die wetlikhede af te handel. Van die mense in die wagkamer herken hom en kom simpatiseer. Die laaste keer wat hy Christel gesien het, was toe sy 'n paar dae vantevore, op Stille Saterdag langs sy hospitaalbed vir genesing gebid het.

Die verteenwoordiger van die ondernemer lei ons deur die labirinte van die kliniek en die tientalle wagtendes na 'n ondersoekkamer eenkant in 'n *prefab*-geboutjie. Paul lig die dokter oor sy bekommernisse in. Sal hy kyk of daar enige teken van 'n onnatuurlike dood is, want hulle het haar beursie leeg en sonder haar identiteitskaart onder die kopkussings gekry? Die dokter wat te oordeel aan sy naamplaatjie en nekband onlangs aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat afgestudeer het, luister aandagtig en respekvol. Hy sal die patoloog vir 'n tweede mening vra, belowe hy. "Terloops, ons kry nie 'n rekord van haar by die kliniek nie. Het julle dalk haar nommer?

"Sy't haar medisyne vir epilepsie hier gekry. Ek weet nie wanneer laas sy hier was nie," antwoord Paul.

Na sy ondersoek kom die dokter aangestap na ons waar ons op dié snikhete dag in die skadu van 'n boom wag. "Ek sien niks onnatuurlik nie, maar ek vra die patoloog." Ons stap terug na die wagkamer met die dokter wat ongemerk in die labirint verdwyn.

"Hoe gaan sy begrawe word," vra die rietskraal verteenwoordiger.

"Ons gaan haar veras," sê ek.

"Dan moet die dokter die vorms daarvoor teken. Ek moet hom dan gaan inlig." Hy verdwyn weer tussen die wagtendes deur en keer na 'n kwartier met leë hande terug. "Ons kan eers môre die sertifikaat kry."

Die afgelope dertig jaar het ons telkens dieselfde begrafnisondernemer gebruik. Eers Pa in Julie 1995, toe Ma in Augustus 2005 en nou Christel in April 2025—sterfgevalle in veelvoude van dekades.

Dis die eerste verassing in ons gesin maar nie die eerste in ons uitgebreide familie nie. Voorheen is antie Rosie en ons neef Ralph aan die moederskant van die familie veras. In die loop van die voorafgaande dae het die res van die gesin sonder teenstand tot 'n vergelyk gekom. Toe my ma net voor haar dood, meer as 20 jaar gelede gevra is, of sy veras wil word, was sy onverbiddelik, "Nooit! Opstandingsdag wil ek op my eie twee bene die Here tegemoet loop."

Ek en Paul staan op die stoep en beraadslaag met Marial oor die begrafnisreëlings. Dis net ons drie, Anton sit in Johannesburg en Clive het huislike

verpligtinge. Dis te drukkend om in die donker huis vol herinneringe om 'n tafel te sit. Die lys van wat gedoen moet word, is alles prakties: Waar is die ID? Het sy rekeninge wat gesluit moet word? Gaan daar 'n biduur wees? Hoe lyk die begrafnisreëlings?

By Alpha & Omega simpatiseer Jonathan Carelse, die direkteur en neem ons na sy kantoor. Ons gesprek is vriendelik maar saaklik, 'n begrafnis moet gereël word. Dis asof ons blokkies op 'n virtuele lysie aftik.

"Dag? Datum? Vakansiedae is duurder. Diens by die huis?"

"Nee."

"Net die kerk dan?"

"Ja."

"Teraardebestelling of verassing?

"Verassing."

"Direk of moet die oorskot by die diens wees?"

"Nie direk nie."

"Ok, ons sal haar mooi maak vir die besigtiging."

"Liewer nie besigtiging nie."

"Maar ons sal haar mooi maak ... Kom ons kyk."

"Gaan iemand haar uitlê of moet ons dit doen?"

"Claudine wil dit graag vir Christel doen," antwoord Paul.

"Goed, ons sal laat weet wanneer sy kan kom."

Ons praat oor geloofstradisies en hul voorkeure in dié tye. Dertig jaar vantevore met Pa se begrafnisreëlings het Jonathan se voorganger, ook 'n Jonathan, 'n vertoonkamer met verskeie doodskiste gehad. Nou is daar geen noodsaak meer nie, 'n katalogus sal voldoende wees. Ons kies 'n kis uit die katalogus wat hy na ons uithou. Besadig en nie uitspattig nie. "Onthou die boodskappies vir die koerantadvertensie en die foto. Ons sal dit vergroot vir die kerkdiens."

Die volgende stop dié Donderdagmiddag is ds. George Murray, die leraar van die Calvyn Protestantse Kerk op die hoek van Le Seuerstraat en Leipoldtlaan. Die dominee en sy vrou ontvang ons met grasie en vriendskap. Daar is 'n lang geskiedenis van die Willemses en dié kerkgenootskap en die dominee sê dis sy voorreg om die begrafnis waar te neem, ten spyte daarvan dat hy met langverlof is. Daar is reëlings met reëls maar vandag het ons reëlings met deernis ontvang, ook hier in die pastorie. Dit tref my, dié is die derde keer dat ek en Paul in hierdie pastorie, telkens 'n ander eerwaarde, 'n afspraak oor 'n begrafnisdiens nakom. Ds. Murray sit ons met 'n innige troosgebed op die pad.

Pas terug by die huis in Buitenkantstraat, klop 'n man en sy gevolg wat uit 'n rooi Volkswagen kombi klim, by die huis aan. Die man stel hom self voor as pastor Adetula Gabriel van The Redeemed Christian Church of God, sy vrou pastor Ruth en 'n gemeentelid. Hy praat met waardering oor Christel en haar passie in dié Pinkster-gemeente en die kragtige getuienis wat sy die afgelope Paassondag in hulle kerk op die tweede verdieping van die Ou Mutual-gebou in Hoogstraat gelewer het. Hulle sou graag 'n waak by die kerk wou hou.

Heeltemal in orde, sê ek en Paul, maar die familie sal waarskynlik nie daar wees nie, hulle is almal uitstedig en ietsie klein word op dieselfde tyd vir die bure beplan wat nie die begrafnis kan bywoon nie. Die pastor begryp en bid besielend oor hul suster-in-Christus wat heengegaan het.

II

Die begrafnisondernemer het 'n foto nodig vir sy advertensie en die begrafnisbrief. Ek soek op my rekenaar en blaai deur ons albums en

Christel met haar ouers Stephen en Cathy (Worcester, November 1980).

'n vloed herinneringe duikel oor die plastiek skutblaaie. Daar sit jy onder 'n palmboom met Ma en Pa, jou eerste foto. Ma wat jou soos 'n porselein-poppie vashou en jy wat met 'n effense frons reguit na die kamera kyk. My inskrywing in die album is verkeerd, die foto is nie op Kersdag 1963 geneem nie. Ek skrap dit met 'n rooi pen uit en verander dit na 1 Maart 1964, jou doopdag. Dieselfde dag as die verjaarsdag van die ou dominee wat spesiaal sy aftrede vir dié geleentheid onderbreek het.

Op daardie dag is ander foto's ook geneem, een waar jy op 'n bankie wuif of waarskynliker, jou hand uitsteek na Ma wat buite die raam staan of die een waar Marial soos dit 'n ouer suster betaam jou aan die hand vasvat, maar jy wankelend voortbeur. Daar's die foto waar jy met jou eerste verjaarsdag op die koffietafel sit, glimlaggend met 'n strikkie in die hare. Drie foto's met drie gesigs-uitdrukkings en drie verskillende emosies wat sekerlik oor die ses dekades van jou lewe sou terugkeer.

Christel met Paul op haar 20ste verjaarsdag (Worcester, 1983).

In ons gesin het die foto op die koffietafel 'n ritueel geword. Behalwe vir die oudste twee, is 'n foto van elk van ons jonger sibbe, vanaf Anton tot Paul, op die koffietafel geneem. My en Clive se foto's ter bevestiging van ons een jaar-status is al sittende tussen die renosterveldbossies van Ladismith geneem.

Ek onthou die dag toe ons uit Mosselbaai vertrek het. Ons staan op die skuins stoep van die hout-en-sinkhuis waar ons vir vier jaar op die werf van die Lutherse Kerk gebly het. Ma het gesorg dat ons almal netjies is, ons hare gekam, elk met 'n behoorlike paadjie, behalwe Marial wie se hare tot op haar skouers hang. Twee jaar later op Worcester, 'n paar maande voordat ons ons nuwe huis op Buitenkantstraat betrek het, is jou hare uitgekam en staan jy en Marial met eenderse wit kuitkouse met frilletjies in eenderse rokkies met ronde krae wat Ma gemaak het.

Die eenderse aantrekkery het julle seker nie gepas nie, want kort voor lank verskyn julle weer saam op foto's, maar dié keer druk jy jou stempel af. Die styl van die lang rokke wat Ma gemaak het, is dieselfde met wyd-geplooide some maar joune is ligblou met blommetjies. Jy poseer selfbewus, jou linkerheup effens uitgestoot soos die modelle wat jy in vrouetydskrifte gesien het. Op 'n latere foto poseer jy met jou eerste bril in 'n geel rok en 'n onderbaadjie, dieselfde materiaal waarmee Ma haar rok gemaak het. Sy het gekies om van die geblomde materiaal 'n serp te maak en jy 'n bostuk.

Ons Willemse-kinders bril, ons erge bysiendheid oorgeërf van Ma. Was dit nie Wally Grove nie wat op 'n keer die hele gesin op die stoep aangetref en gesê het, "Daar sit die Willemses, almal bril behalwe die hond!" Jy het nie van 'n bril gehou nie, want op talle foto's verskyn jy daarsonder soos die een met Grandma Miemie 'n paar maande voordat sy 'n verlammende beroerte gehad het. Maar jy was altyd bewus van jou eie beeld. Op dié foto dra jy 'n ligte spierwit rok met 'n rooi bessie-borsspeld wat die indruk van jeugdige selfvertroue afrond. Dieselfde dag is jy afgeneem met Marial op die grasperk voor die huis. Jou oë is toe, maar jy is nie onbewus van die moment nie. Op 'n ander poseer jy selfbewus in 'n pienk rok met groot knope, tipies van die 1980's, jou hare opgekam terwyl jou linkerhand liggies op jou skouer rus.

Jy verskyn op talle foto's met Paul, die eerste voor 'n dekoratiewe muur. Jy en Marial staan aan weerskante van Pa en Paul, nie veel ouer as tien maande nie, sit op sy knie. Jy is vyf jaar oud en jy lyk verbaas. 'n Jaar of wat later het Pa daardie mooi muur afgebreek en die eetkamer op die stoep laat bou. Dis dieselfde eetkamer wat vyf-en-twintig jaar later in ligte laaie gestaan het toe klippe en 'n petrolbom na die huis gegooi is.

"Dit was verskriklik gewees, dit was verskriklik. . . want hulle val my pa aan. Hy was kalm, hy't gesê, 'Dié mense weet nie wat hulle doen nie. Hulle word aangesê deur mense wat haat en bitterheid en onmin wil saai. Ons moet hulle vergewe en vryspreek.'" Op die stemopname vir die projek waaraan ek werk, praat jy met deernis van ons ouers en jou besef oor die plek van gebed in jou lewe, "Dan besef jy, ja jy moet, want met bitterheid en haat kan jy

nie in jou hart voortgaan om te lewe nie. Dit het ek kom leer. En toe bid my ma en my pa hier in die eetkamer. Die belangrikste vir my ouers was om saam te bid. Dit het my weer laat besef: Gebed dra groot krag."

Ja, jy het van jongs af jou geloof ernstig opgeneem en altyd met dwingendheid gebid. Ek onthou die keer, met ons vieringe op Oukersaand ná Pa se dood, toe jy met jou gebruiklike intensiteit voorgebid het en Ma jou moes inkatrol, "Christel, die Here't jou nou al gehoor, jy kan nou maar Amen sê."

Ons het so gelag toe jy jou wenkbroue by Pa se begrafnis afgeskeer en met 'n swart oogomlyner nagetrek het. Jy het glad nie van ons reaksie gehou nie en jare later toe ons dit weer ophaal, het jy ons met beslistheid op WhatsApp tereggewys. "Ek's 'n Koningskind, ek's my Vader se kind, ek's die Here se kind. Ek is baie ontsteld." My verskoning het jy sondermeer aanvaar, "x aanvaar jou apologie, mooi dag verder" en dit met jou geliefde woord "Shalom" as afgehandel beskou. Jy laat nie met jou mors nie, sê ons in goeie Afrikaans. Ek is seker in jou vriendekring is daar talle wat daarvan kan getuig, maar hulle sal ook bevestig dat jy maklik kon vergewe.

Jou epileptiese aanvalle het jou lewe beïnvloed. Ek onthou hoe tydens 'n aanval Ma 'n lepel in jou mond moes druk om te keer dat jy jou tong afbyt. Ek onthou hoe Pa erg bekommerd my kantoor gebel het toe jy jouself in Johannesburg bevind en nie van jou laat hoor het nie, "Wat as die kind daar 'n aanval kry, waar sy niemand ken nie?" Toe ek voorstel dat jy moet leer kar bestuur, was jou antwoord, "En as ek 'n toeval kry?"

Jy was nooit prakties ingestel nie, soos dié keer toe jy my in Pretoria gebel het om te sê dat die drein in die kombuis verstop is en jy 'n loodgieter moet inkry, en ek gesê het, "Gaan koop net *drain cleaner* en lees die aanwysings."

Die esoteriese het jou aangetrek. Jare gelede het jy 'n volle uur gesit om numerologie aan my te verduidelik en syfers en datums met my lewensloop te verbind.

Ja, die onkenbare, die mistieke, die bonatuurlike, die onverklaarbare het jou aangetrek. Op Facebook sien ek jou tydens die diens van die gemeente in Hoogstraat. Die lof- en aanbiddingroetine het jou duidelik meegevoer.

Die herinneringe het voortgetuimel en ek het nie 'n geskikte foto gekry nie. Jy het ook 'n ander lewe gehad en vriende met ander herinneringe. Paul en Claudine stuur op my versoek voorstelle uit hulle ryk versameling foto's. Jy het oor die jare hulle gesinsgeleenthede bygewoon. Dit is 'n gerf vol herinneringe van verjaarsdae, die kinders, Catelin en Carryn, as jong kinders tot jong volwassenes, deur die Covid-tyd, in restaurante, op strande, die byeenkomste by Clive en Melanie waar jy jou voete in die swembad baai. Jy met jou verskillende haarstyle,

Christel en haar Willemse-gesinslede. Agter: Hein, Carryn, Catelin, Melanie, Antonia, Claudine, Paul en Clive. Voor: Bianca, Raydene West, Danilynn, Zhion, Sheila Albertus en Christel (Somerset-Wes, Desember 2023).

soms gekleur—rooi, blond en bruin—soms lank en later toe jy ouer is, 'n korter haarstyl. Oor die jare het jy deurlopend slank en modieus gebly. Jy't jou mooi opgepas, sou die oumense sê.

Maar die ondernemer wag en my mymering vertraag die proses. Uiteindelik kies ek twee foto's: een vir die aankondiging van jou begrafnis en die ander vir die begrafnisbrief. Dit is goed dat die foto's uit dié periode van jou lewe kom, dit is soos mense jou sou wou onthou, vir jou glimlag, jou omgee en jou mededeelsaamheid.

III

Die ondernemer is stiptelik om 9:30 om die naaste gesinslede teen 'n stadige pas na die kerk te begelei. Op die hoek van Leipoldtlaan en Greystraat keer 'n verkeerskonstabel die verkeer af en haal uit sy hoed af en salueer die stoet. Elf dae na haar dood bring Christel ons byeen: familie van heinde en verre, bure wat ons dertig jaar laas gesien het en haar vriende oor die loop van haar lewe.

Dis 'n entjie om die oorskot te dra, van die ses vrouedraers sukkel ietwat en van die mans staan by om die kis die trappies op te dra. Dertig jaar tevore met Pa se begrafnis het die ondernemer gesê, "die oorledene werk nie juis saam nie". 'n Week tevore het ons op televisie gesien hoe selfs van die pous se twaalf manlike draers sukkel onder die gewig.

Tradisie wil dit hê dat vroue by die begrafnis van 'n vrou die laaste eerbetoon bring. Om 'n draer te wees, sê Sheila, is 'n voorreg. Al is sy 81 jaar oud stem sy sonder huiwering in om, soos Yvonne wat in haar middel-sewentigs is, 'n draer vir hul niggie te wees. Van die ander draers is Christel se vriendinne: Deidre, Faith, Karen en Michelle. Iemand is nie betyds nie en op die nippertjie vra ons Rosaline, ons niggie van Raithby, om in te staan. By die krematorium sou dit die beurt van die geslag van jonger vroue wees, die susters- en broerskinders, om die oorskot die laaste treë te begelei met Tatum wat vir haar ma, Farah-Naz, instaan.

Terwyl ek die huldeblyke, Paul se *memento mori* en Chrystal Pietersen se a capella lied aanhoor, besef ek weereens: Begrafnisse is kragtige kulturele rituele. 'n Mens sterf in 'n gemeenskap, in verhouding tot andere en nou moet die oorlewendes hulself herskik. Die begrafnis is ons manier om ons verlies te erken, Christel te eer en afsluiting te kry. Vir van die roubeklaers is die dood 'n oorgang van een fase na 'n ander, vir ander 'n moment van onomkeerbare finaliteit vir elk 'n bevestiging van hulle oortuigings.

Ds. Murray bied die roudiens met eerbied aan en daar is 'n aanvoelbare gedraenheid toe ek onder die dodemars die kers blus en ons neefs Bevan en Mervyn Williams nooi om saam met ons, Christel se broers, haar oorskot die kerk uit te dra. Voor ons stap naas ds. Murray ook ds. Jeff Wilson, pastor Gabriel en oom Frikkie Braaff, Claudine se pa. Ds. Wilson huldig in sy slotgebed Pa se ondersteuning wat dit vir hom moontlik gemaak het om 'n predikant te word. Christel sou dié herinnering en gebaar op prys gestel het.

Ons reis die paar kilometer na die krematorium wat uit 'n era kom toe verassing minder algemeen was. Dis 'n neerdrukkende plek, industrieel in alle opsigte. Die twee werkers wat die fasiliteit beman, is eerbiedig maar hulle het 'n werk om te doen. "Die as sal oor twee en 'n half uur beskikbaar wees, maar Alpha het gereël om dit Maandag af te haal." 'n Paar groot gastenke vuur die twee oonde aan. Iemand het die verbeelding gehad om dit te benoem: die een Willem, die ander Meraai.

Farah-Naz en Aaliyah gee 'n tikkie kleur aan die triestigheid toe hulle kinders bondels pienk en wit ballonne voor die oop roldeur van die krematorium vrylaat. Die ballonne, gevul met helium, styg moeiteloos die lug in en behalwe vir 'n paar wat aan die hakiesdraad vashaak, verdwyn dit vinnig uit ons gesigsveld. "It's like aunty Christel had disappeared into heaven," sê een van hulle kinders.

Daar is nie genoeg plek om almal te akkommodeer nie. In 'n kamertjie voor die oonde, nie groter as 'n huisgang nie, doen ds. Murray sy finale formulier "van stof tot stof" en hy vra die aanwesiges om die "Onse Vader" te bid. Daarna dra ons die kis tot voor Meraai waar die werkers dit op die laaibak van die oond oordra. Party van ons kom staan rondom die oond, ander verkies om nie dié finale daad te aanskou nie. Daar is geen verdere seremonie of finale woord nie, slegs ons eie gedagtes en herinneringe. Dan stoot die werkers die kis vinnig en hard die oond in. Oomblikke later borrel die eerste rook by die skoorsteen uit.

Dae later, plaas Paul Christel se as in die graf van ons ouers, "Ons gee haar nou terug vir die aarde, Here. Dankie dat sy 61 jaar met ons kon wees."

An unexpected death

Hein Willemse

Memento mori, memento vivere
"Remember to die, remember to live"

Friends and family gather at the funeral of Christel on Saturday, May 3, 2025 at the Calvyn Protestant Church, Worcester.

I

The message came while we were driving back from Knysna to Kleinkrantz. Against all expectation, RSG's midday news made no mention of updated reactions to the death of Pope Francis, who had passed away the previous day, Easter Monday.

I heard the phone ring, but didn't answer—it was Marial. Out of habit, I don't take calls while driving, though I always return them later. Half an hour later, another call came. Paul. If it was urgent, he'd try again, I figured. Sure enough, moments later, the phone rang again. Paul again. I handed the phone to Carol. This felt like an emergency.

"He wants to speak to you," she said, pressing the phone to my ear. I brushed it aside. "I'll call him back when we get home."

"Tell him to pull over. It's urgent," I heard him say faintly through the phone. We were on a long curve on the N2 between the Rheenendal and Buffels Bay turn-offs, with no safe place to stop immediately. It took several tense seconds in heavy traffic before I could pull off near the Buffels Bay turn-off.

"Yes, Paul?"
"I've got bad news. It looks like Christel may have passed."
"What?!"

"Yes. Marial phoned me a while ago. She and a friend of Christel's went to check on her. The friend had been trying to reach her and got no reply. Marial hadn't seen her in the yard all morning.

The house was locked up tight. Eventually they managed to force open the sliding door to her room and pulled back the curtains. Through the security bars, they saw her —still in her nighty, face-down in the pillows, her hands clenched."

"We called the police and the undertaker," he added. Paul still sounded ill; he'd been called from a sickbed.

"What is it?" Carol asked after I ended the call. She listened, stunned. We drove the rest of the way in silence.

Back home, I called Paul again. They were still waiting for the undertaker.

"Are you sure she's dead?" I asked.

He had hesitated the first time; now his answer was firm. "She's cold. Rigor mortis has already set in."

Paul wondered aloud if something unnatural had happened. "The police haven't come yet."

For the next few hours, our family dealt with the shock and confusion each in our own way. Could she have died naturally? Was there foul play? No sign of forced entry. The house was locked, nothing disturbed. And yet—how could it be? She was fit, slender, healthy, with no apparent ailments.

WILLEMSE, CHRISTEL DJ
GEB: 28.11.1963 - GEST: 22.04.2025

Troosdiens vind plaas Saterdag, 03 Mei 2025 om 10:00 vanuit Calvyn Protestantse Kerk, Leipoldtlaan.

Her faith was unshakable and admirable. She was a shining light to all around her. Rest in Peace.
Carol and Hein

Dis met groot hartseer dat ons van jou afskeid neem Christel. Jy sal altyd in ons harte bly. Rus sag.
Clive, Melanie, Bianca, Steffen en Zhion

In loving memory of a gentle soul. Forever remembered and always in our hearts.
Anton, Andrea, Stephen and Antonia

We will always cherish the memories we shared. Rest in eternal peace.
Love Marial, children and grandchildren

To a beloved sister and aunty, we will cherish and miss the time spent with you.Your work on earth is completed.Rest in Godly peace.
Paul, Claudine, Catelin and Carryn

Death leaves a heartache no one can heal. Love leaves a memory no one can steal. You left an emptiness no one can fulfill. You will be forever in our hearts dear Aunty Christel.
Farah-Naz, Shane, and family

Rest in peace, Auntie Christel. We will forever cherish the memories
Aaliyah, Walleeh and children

May your dear soul rest in peace, Auntie Christel. You are gone, but not forgotten.
Jeremy, Elzanne and children

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Standard Breederivier Gazette, 1 May 2025, p. 13.

In our conversations, one possibility kept surfacing: her epilepsy. But she hadn't had a seizure in years, some said. Still, for those of us who knew her, it remained the only explanation. She must have suffered a severe epileptic attack, which might explain her tightly clenched fists.

Days later, I searched online for the six stages of rigor mortis. From that, it was clear: when Marial and Franzail forced the sliding door open, Christel had already been dead for at least eight hours. Most likely, she passed before midnight. She opened a chapter on the Willemse family history I had shared on our WhatsApp group at 6:51 p.m. on April 21, and at 7:03 p.m. she sent what would be her final message: "Good evening, Hein. Wishing you and Carol a peaceful night of rest, health, and love. God's richest blessings. Shalom."

It was earlier than usual. Often, she sent her nightly greeting as late as 10 p.m. All things considered, I am convinced she died later that Easter Monday night.

We cut short our holiday in the Southern Cape and travelled back the 500 kms. The day after our return, I met Paul at the clinic on the grounds of Worcester Hospital. He still felt unwell—lightheaded, with some pressure behind his eyes. But we were not there for his health; we were there to complete the legalities. People in the waiting room recognised him and offered their condolences. The last time he saw Christel was when she had visited him on Holy Saturday to pray by his hospital bed.

A representative from the funeral home led us through the maze of corridors and waiting rooms to an exam room in a prefab building. Paul explained his concerns to the doctor. "Could you check for anything suspicious? Her purse was empty, and her ID card was missing."

The doctor, fresh from the University of the Free State judging by his badge and lanyard, listened respectfully. He promised to consult a pathologist for a second opinion. "By the way, we have no medical record for her here. Do you have her patient number?"

"She used to collect her epilepsy medication here. I'm not sure when last she came," Paul replied.

After examining the body, the doctor came outside to where we waited under a tree in the heat.

"I see nothing unusual," he said, "but I'll ask the pathologist."

We walked back to the waiting area. The doctor disappeared into the labyrinth of the clinic.

"How will she be buried?" asked the scrawny funeral rep.

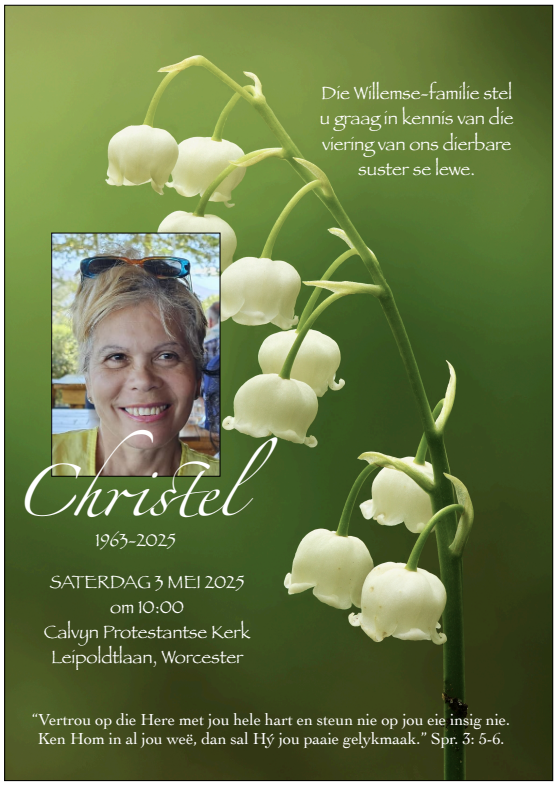
"We're having her cremated," I said.

"Then the doctor needs to complete the forms. I'll go tell him."

He again vanished into the crowd and returned empty-handed fifteen minutes later. "We can only get the certificate tomorrow."

For thirty years, we'd used the same undertaker: first my father in July 1995, then my mother in August 2005, and now Christel in April 2025—each loss spaced by multiples of a decade.

It is the first cremation in our immediate family, though not the first among our extended relatives. Aunt Rosie and our cousin Ralph had been cremated years earlier. In the days that followed, the rest of the family agreed without objection. When my mother was asked shortly before her death over twenty years ago whether she wanted to be cremated, she was adamant: "Never! On Resurrection Day, I want to meet the Lord on my own two feet."


Die Willemse-familie stel
u graag in kennis van die
viering van ons dierbare
suster se lewe.
Christel
1963-2025
SATERDAG 3 MEI 2025
om 10:00
Calvyn Protestantse Kerk
Leipoldtlaan, Worcester
"Vertrou op die Here met jou hele hart en steun nie op jou eie insig nie.
Ken Hom in al jou weë, dan sal Hý jou paaie gelykmaak." Spr. 3: 5-6.

Paul and I stood on the porch, discussing funeral arrangements with Marial. Just the three of us. Anton was in Johannesburg, Clive had family obligations. It was too stifling to sit inside the house full of memories. Our checklist was practical: Where's her ID? Any accounts to close? Should there be a prayer service? What about the funeral details?

At Alpha & Omega, director Jonathan Carelse met us with sympathy and took us to his office. The conversation was considerate, but focused. A funeral had to be arranged. It felt like ticking boxes on an implicit list.

"Day? Date? Holidays cost more. Service at the house?"

"No."

"Just the church, then?"

"Yes."

"Burial or cremation?"

"Cremation."

"Direct, or will the body be present at the service?"

"Not direct."

"Okay, we'll prepare her for viewing."

"We'd prefer no viewing."

"But we'll make her beautiful... Let's see."

"Will someone lay her out, or should we do that?"

"Claudine would like to do that for Christel," Paul said.

"All right. We'll let you know when she can come."

We spoke about faith traditions and how they were evolving. Thirty years earlier, during my father's arrangements, Jonathan's predecessor (also named Jonathan) had a showroom full of caskets. Now a catalogue sufficed. We picked one—sober and dignified. "Don't forget the message, the advertisement, for the newspaper notice and the photo. We'll enlarge it for the church service."

That Thursday afternoon, we visited Reverend George Murray at the Calvin Protestant Church on the corner of Le Seuer Street and Leipoldt Avenue. He and his wife welcomed us warmly. There's a long history of the Willemses in this denomination. He said it was an honour to conduct the funeral, even though he was officially on extended leave. His compassion was clear. It struck me: this was the third time Paul and I had come to this parsonage, each time a different reverend, to arrange a funeral. Reverend Murray sent us on our way with a deeply moving prayer.

Just back at the house on Buitenkant Street, a man and his companions stepped out of a red Volkswagen Kombi and knocked at the door. He introduced himself as Pastor Adetula Gabriel of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, along with his wife, Pastor Ruth, and a church member. He spoke with deep affection for Christel, her passion for the congregation, and the powerful testimony she had given the past Easter Sunday in their church on the second floor of the Old Mutual building in High Street. They wanted to hold a night vigil at the church.

Paul and I agreed. "Of course," we said. But we explained that the family likely wouldn't be there—most were out of town, and a smaller gathering was being planned at the same time for the neighbours who wouldn't be able to attend the funeral. The pastor understood and prayed fervently the soul of their departed sister-in-Christ.

II

The undertaker needed a photo for his advertisement and the funeral programme. I searched on my computer and flip through our albums, and a flood of memories tumbled over the plastic divider pages. There you were, sitting under a palm tree with Mom and Dad —your first photo. Mom holds you like a porcelain doll, and you, with a slight frown, look straight at the camera. My entry in the album was incorrect; the photo was not taken on Christmas Day 1963. I crossed it out with a red pen and changed it to 1 March 1964—your baptism day. The same day as the birthday of the old minister who had specially come out of retirement for the occasion.

Some other photos were taken that day too—one where you wave from a little bench or, more likely, reach out to Mom standing just outside the frame; or the one where Marial, like any older sister, took your hand while you tottered forward. There's the photo of your first birthday, sitting on the coffee table, smiling with a ribbon in your hair. Three photos with three facial expressions and three distinct emotions that would surely return throughout the six decades of your life.

In our family, the photo on the coffee table became a ritual. Except for the two eldest, each of our younger siblings—from Anton to Paul—had a photo taken on the coffee table. Clive and I had ours taken among the renosterveld shrubs of Ladismith, confirming our one-year-old status.

I remember the day we left Mossel Bay. We stood on the slanted porch of the wood-and-corrugated iron house where we had lived for four years on the grounds of the Lutheran Church. Mom made sure we were all neat, hair combed, each with a proper parting—except for Marial, whose hair hung to her shoulders. Two years later in Worcester, a few months before moving into our new house on Buitenkant Street, your hair was combed out, and you and Marial stood in matching white calf-length frilly socks and the matching dresses with rounded collars Mom made.

The matching outfits probably didn't suit you, because before long, you and Marial appear in photos again, but this time you're asserting your individuality. The style of the long dresses Mom made remained the same, with wide pleated hems, but yours was light blue with tiny flowers.

You pose confidently, left hip slightly jutted, like the models you'd seen in women's magazines. In a later photo, you pose in a yellow dress and a waistcoat made from the same material Mom used for her dress. She chose to make a scarf out of the floral fabric, and you a bodice.

We Willemse children wear glasses, inheriting our severe near-sightedness from

Mom. Wasn't it Wally Grove who once saw the family on the porch and said, "There sit the Willemses, all wearing glasses—except the dog!" You didn't like wearing glasses, and in many photos you appear without them—like the one with Grandma Miemie, a few months before her paralysing stroke. But you were always aware of your image. In that photo, you wear a light white dress with a red berry brooch that adds a final touch of youthful confidence. That same day, you were photographed with Marial on the front lawn. Your eyes are closed, but you're not unaware of the moment. In another, you pose confidently in a pink dress with large buttons—so typical of the 1980s—with your hair fluffed up and your left hand gently resting on your shoulder.

You appear in many photos with Paul—the first in front of a decorative wall. You and Marial stand on either side of Dad, and Paul, not much older than ten months, sits on his knee. You're five years old and look surprised. A year or so later, Dad tore down that beautiful wall and had the dining room built onto the porch. It's the same dining room that, twenty-five years later, went up in flames when stones and a petrol bomb were thrown at the house.

"It was terrible, it was terrible… because they were attacking my father. He was calm; he said, 'These people don't know what they're doing. They're being driven by those who want to sow hatred and bitterness and division. We must forgive and release them.'" In the recording for the project I'm working on, you speak with tenderness about our parents and your understanding of the place of prayer in your life. "Then you realise, yes, you must—because you can't go on living with bitterness and hatred in your heart. That's what I came to learn. And then my mother and father prayed there in the dining room. The most important thing for my parents was praying together. That reminded me again—prayer is powerful."

Yes, from an early age, you took your faith seriously and prayed with urgency. I remember that Christmas Eve after Dad's death, when you led the prayer with your usual zeal, and Mom had to gently reel you in: "Christel, the Lord has heard you now, you can say Amen."

We laughed so hard when you shaved off your eyebrows at Dad's funeral and drew them back with black eyeliner. You didn't like our reaction at all, and years later when we brought it up again, you firmly chastised us on WhatsApp: "I'm a child of the Lord, I'm my Father's child, I'm the Lord's child. I'm very upset." You accepted my apology without hesitation: "I accept your apology, have a good day," and with your beloved word "Shalom," you considered the matter settled. You took no prisoners or as they say in respectable Afrikaans: *Jy laat nie met jou mors nie.* I'm sure many in your circle of friends could testify to that—but they'd also confirm how easily you forgave.

Your epileptic seizures affected your life. I remember how, during one episode, Mom had to press a spoon into your mouth to stop you

Christel amidst the congregation of the Redeemed Christian Church of God in High Street, Worcester (Facebook, 2024, 2025).

Christel in her various hairdo's with Paul, Claudine, Catelin and Carryn. Left: Carryn's birthday (Worcester, January 2024). Centre: Catelin's matric ball, (Worcester, October 2021). Right: On vacation (New Year, Gordon's Bay, 2018).

from biting your tongue. I remember how worried Dad was when you were in Johannesburg and didn't make contact. He called me at the office: "What if the child has a seizure there, where she knows no-one?" When I suggested you learn to drive, your answer was, "And if I have a seizure?"

You were never practically minded, like the time you called me in Pretoria to say the kitchen drain was blocked and you needed to call a plumber, and I said, "Just buy drain cleaner and follow the instructions."

The esoteric always attracted you. Years ago, you spent a full hour explaining numerology to me, linking numbers and dates to the course of my life. Yes, the unknowable, the mystical, the supernatural, the inexplicable always drew you in. On Facebook, I saw you during a service at the church in High Street. The praise and worship routine clearly swept you up.

The memories kept pouring in, and I couldn't find a suitable photo. You also had another life, and friends with other memories. At my request, Paul and Claudine sent some suggestions from their expansive photo collection. Over the years, you attended their family events. They sent a bundle of memories of birthdays, the children, Catelin and Carryn, from little ones to young adults, through the COVID years, in restaurants, on beaches, gatherings at Clive and Melanie's, where you dipped your feet in the pool. You with your different hairstyles, sometimes coloured—red, blonde, and brown—sometimes long, in the latter years a bit shorter. Over the years, you remained consistently slim and stylish. "You always looked after yourself," the oldies would say. But the undertaker is waiting, and my musing delays the process. At last, I choose two photos: one for the funeral announcement and another for the funeral programme. It's fitting that the photos came from this period of your life. This is how people would want to remember you: your smile, your kindness, and your generous spirit.

Farah-Naz and Aaliyah, and their children released bunches of pink and white balloons at the crematorium.

III

The undertaker arrived promptly at 9:30 to escort the closest family members at a slow pace to the church. On the corner of Leipoldt Avenue and Grey Street, a traffic officer stopped the traffic, took off his hat, and saluted the procession. Eleven days after her death, Christel brought us together: family from far and wide, neighbours we haven't seen in thirty years, and her friends from across her life.

It's quite a walk to carry the remains, and some of the six female pallbearers struggled a bit, with some of the men stepping in to help carry the coffin up the steps. Thirty years earlier, at Dad's funeral, the undertaker had said, "The deceased isn't exactly cooperating." A week ago, we saw on television how even some of the Pope's twelve male pallbearers struggled under the weight.

Tradition holds that, at a woman's funeral, it is women who should give the final honour. To be a pallbearer, Sheila said, is a privilege. Even though she is 81 years old, she agreed without hesitation—just like Yvonne, who is in her mid-seventies—to bear their cousin's coffin. Some of the other pallbearers were Christel's friends: Deidre, Faith, Karen, and Michelle. Someone was not on time, and at the last minute we asked Rosaline, our cousin from Raithby, to stand in.

At the crematorium, it was the turn of the younger generation of nieces to accompany the remains, with Tatum standing in for her mother, Farah-Naz.

As I listened to the tributes, Paul's memento mori, and Chrystal Pietersen's a cappella song, I realised once again: Funerals are powerful cultural rituals. One dies in a community, in relationship to others, and now the survivors must readjust their relationships. The funeral acknowledges our loss, honour Christel, and allow us to find closure. For some mourners, death is a transition from one phase to another; for others, it is a moment of irreversible finality, and this ritual confirms their beliefs.

Reverend Murray led the memorial service with reverence, and there was palpable solemnity when, under the dead march, I extinguished the candle and invited our cousins Bevan and Mervyn Williams to help us—Christel's brothers—carry her remains out of the church. Walking ahead of us were not only Reverend Murray but also Reverend Jeff Wilson, Pastor Gabriel, and Uncle Frikkie Braaff, Claudine's father. In his closing prayer, Reverend Wilson paid tribute to Dad's support, which made it possible for him to become a minister. Christel would have appreciated that memory and gesture.

We travelled the few kilometres to the crematorium, which dates from an era when cremation was less common. It is a depressing place, industrial in every way. The two workers who managed the facility are respectful, but they have a job to do. "The ashes will be available in

Screengrabs of Paul's interment of Christel's ashes in her parents' grave (Worcester, May 14, 2025).

two and a half hours, but Alpha has arranged to collect it on Monday." There are a number of huge gas tanks fuelling the two ovens. Someone had the imagination to name them: one is called Willem, the other Meraai.

Farah-Naz and Aaliyah brought a touch of colour to the sadness when their children released bunches of pink and white balloons in front of the open roller doors of the crematorium. The helium-filled balloons rise effortlessly into the sky, and except for a few that got stuck on the barbed wire, they quickly disappeared from our sight. "It's like Aunty Christel had disappeared into heaven," one of the children said.

There wasn't enough space to accommodate everyone. In a small room in front of the ovens, no larger than a hallway, Reverend Murray performed his final rite, "from dust to dust," and asked those present to pray the Lord's Prayer. Then we carried the coffin to Meraai, where the workers transferred it onto the oven's loading tray. Some of us stood around the oven, while others had chosen not to witness this final act. There was no further ceremony or final word, only our own thoughts and memories. Then the workers pushed the coffin quickly and firmly into the oven. Moments later, the first smoke rose from the chimney.

MET LIEFDE AAN
MY DIERBARE EGGENOOT, ONS VADER EN OUPA
STEPHANUS JACOBUS
☆ 5 · 12 · 1923
✝ 8 · 7 · 1995
ONS DIERBARE MOEDER EN OUMA
CATHERINE DOROTHY
☆ 1 · 10 · 1926
✝ 13 · 8 · 2005
WILLEMSE
OPENBARING 14:13 "GESEËND IS DIE WAT VAN NOU AF IN DIE HERE STERWE"
CHRISTEL DOROTHY JOY
WILLEMSE

Days later, Paul interred Christel's ashes in our parents' grave with these words, "We now return her to the earth, Lord. Thank you that she could be with us for 61 years."

The next generation present at Christel's funeral: Back: Kyle Chinasamy, Tatum Chinasamy, Ammaraah Moosa, Miché Willemse and Danilynn Willemse. Front: Kaylene Willemse, Zayyan Moosa, Zhion Willemse, Mustaqeem Moosa and Maya Chinasamy. (Worcester, May 3, 2025).

Bedankings

Clive Willemse

Geagte begrafnisgangers,
Ek is gevra om die volgende bedankings namens die familie te doen.

Eerstens, alle eer aan ons Hemelse Vader dat Hy Christel vir 61 jaar uitgespaar het. Ons vind vertroosting in die feit dat sy nou op ’n beter plek is.

Ons wil ons dank en waardering uitspreek aan die volgende persone:

Ds. George Murray wat die erediens asook die verassing waargeneem het. Die familie voel geëerd dat u ingestem het om die diens waar te neem. Dankie vir u wonderlike boodskap van deernis, hoop en vertroosting.

Die koster, broer Savvas Tiqua vir die voorbereiding van die kerk en saal, ook vir die klank- en video-aanbieding.

Clarence Paulse, ons orrelis vandag.

Paul Willemse en Rochelle Saayman wat aangrypende huldeblyke gelewer het. Michelle Jass en Monica Nonney Meiring wat briewe geskryf het wat voorgelees is.

Chrystal Jass Pietersen vir u pragtige sangstuk.

Ons dank aan pastor Adetula Gabriel van die Redeemed Christian Church of God vir hul simpatieke ondersteuning van die familie en die aanbieding van hul waak in die middel van die week.

Cathleen Jacobs vir die leiding en aanbieding van u biduur by die huis.

Marial Willemse-Duminy wat die familie in kennis gestel het van die sterfte, en die bure en vriende wat medelye wou betoon, ontvang het.

Paul Willemse wat nadat hy verneem het van Christel se heengaan die nodige praktiese reëlings met deernis getref en leiding met die reël van die begrafnis geneem het.

Hein Willemse vir sy bystand en leiding met die reël van die begrafnis, die maak van die video *Christel Pictorial*, en die uitleg van die kennisgewing en begrafnisbrief.

Jonathan Carelse van Alpha & Omega-ondernemers wat voortreflike diens gelewer het. Ons waardeer u hulp en bystand.

Die Worcester-verkeersdepartement vir hul flinke diens.

Ons dank ook aan alle persone wat ’n bydrae op verskillende maniere gelewer het.

Ant Sylvia (92), die weduwee van Peter Samuels, en die langslewende lid van die uitgebreide Samuels-familie het die begrafnis bygewoon. (Worcester, 3 Mei, 2025).

Ons dank aan Claudine Willemse en Aaliyah Moosa wat die leiding rondom die spysenering geneem het. Ons dank ook aan alle persone wat gehelp het met die bediening van die versnaperinge na afloop van die verassing.

U word uitgenooi om na afloop van die verrigtinge ’n koppie tee in die kerksaal te kom geniet.

Ten slotte, aan almal wat ’n handdruk, SMS-, WhatsApp-boodskappe, Facebookinskrywings of oproepe gemaak het, baie dankie. Die familie waardeer elkeen van hierdie gebare en stel dit hoog op prys. Indien ek enigiemand uitgelaat het, vra ek opreg om verskoning.

Baie dankie. *God bless.*

Words of Thanks

Clive Willemse

Dear Mourners,

I have been requested to extend the following words of gratitude on behalf of the family.

First and foremost, we give all glory and thanks to our Heavenly Father for granting us the gift of Christel's life for 61 years. We find solace in the belief that she now rests in a place of peace and eternal comfort.

We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the following individuals:

To Reverend George Murray, who graciously led both the memorial service and the cremation. The family is deeply honoured by your presence and thankful for your compassionate message of hope and consolation.

To the sexton, Brother Savvas Tiqua, for preparing the church and hall, and for overseeing the audio-visual arrangements.

To Clarence Paulse, who served as the organist for today's service.

To Paul Willemse and Rochelle Saayman, for their heartfelt tributes. We also extend our thanks to Michelle Jass and Monica Nonney Meiring, whose written messages were read during the service.

To Chrystal Jass Pietersen, for your beautiful and moving musical tribute.

To Pastor Adetula Gabriel of the Redeemed Christian Church of God, for the church's kind and prayerful support of the family, and for conducting the midweek vigil.

To Cathleen Jacobs, for leading the prayer service held at the family home.

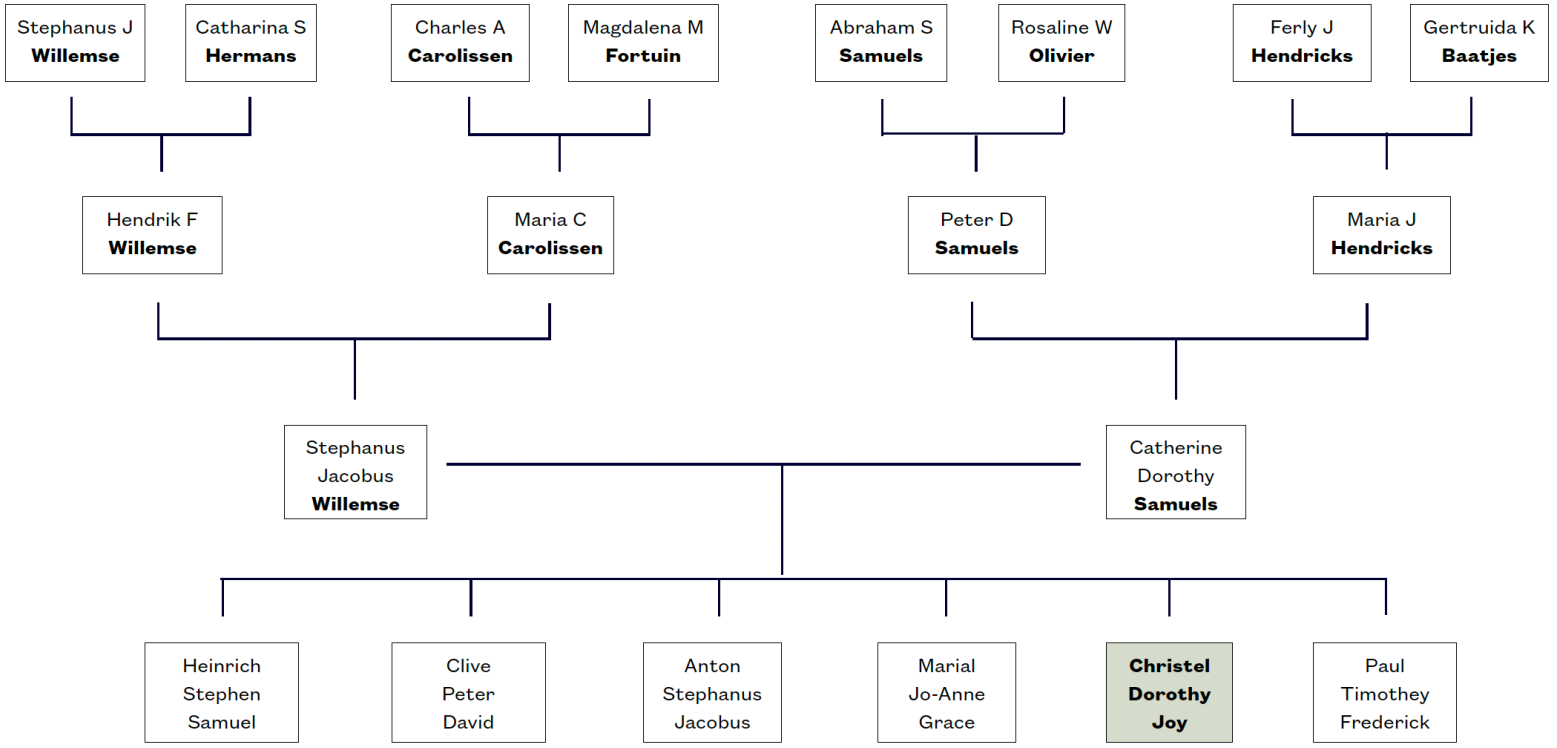
To Marial Willemse-Duminy, who informed the family of Christel's passing, and who received neighbours and friends wishing to extend their condolences.

To Paul Willemse, who, upon learning of Christel's passing, took immediate and thoughtful initiative in making the necessary funeral arrangements and providing guidance throughout.

To Hein Willemse, for his assistance in coordinating the funeral, producing the video tribute *Christel Pictorial*, and designing both the funeral notice and programme.

Attending members of the extended family: Back: Brittle Williams, Jolene Johnson, Marius Ehrenreich, Clive Wilemse, Mervyn Williams. Middle: Suzie Carolissen, Constance Willemse, Mimi Esterhuizen, Marial Willemse-Duminy, Charlotte Anderson, Bevan Williams, Yvonne Simpson, Adri-lee Willemse. Front: Paul Willemse and Hein Willemse (Worcester, May 3, 2025).

Geslagsregister, Family tree c. 1860



To Jonathan Carelse of Alpha & Omega Funeral Services, for your professionalism and assistance during this time of mourning. Your support is deeply appreciated.

To the Worcester Traffic Department, for their prompt and efficient service.

We are also grateful to all those who contributed in various ways to the success and dignity of this day.

Special thanks go to Claudine Willemse and Aaliyah Moosa, who oversaw the catering arrangements, and to all who assisted with the serving of refreshments following the cremation.

You are warmly invited to join us for tea in the church hall after the conclusion of the proceedings.

In conclusion, we extend heartfelt thanks to each and every person who offered a handshake, sent a message via SMS, WhatsApp or Facebook, or made a phone call.

Your expressions of sympathy have brought the family great comfort and are deeply valued.

Should anyone inadvertently have been omitted, please accept our sincere apologies.

Thank you, and may God bless you.

Back: Maya Chinasamy, Tatum Chinasamy, Ammaraah Moosa, Hein Willemse, Clive Willemse, Anton Willemse and Miché Willemse. Centre: Danilynn Willemse, Melanie Willemse, Aaliyah Moosa, Marial Duminy-Willemse, Luzaan Willemse and Andrea Willemse. Front: Carol Mohamed, Antonia Willemse, Bianca Willemse, Farah-Naz Chinasamy, Zhion Willemse, Kaylene Willemse, Zayyan Moosa, and Mustaqeem Moosa. (Worcester, May 3, 2025).

SLIPPEDRAERS

Na die Kerk:

Deidre Janse
Michelle Jazz
Sheila Albertus
Faith Schroeder
Karen Gordon
Yvonne Simpson

Uit die Kerk:

Anton Willemse
Heinrich Willemse
Paul Willemse
Clive Willemse
Jean-Ray Duminy
Mervyn Williams

Na die Krematorium:

Andrea Willemse
Bianca Willemse
Carryn Willemse
Antonia Willemse
Catelin Willemse
Farah-Naz Chinasamy

Video: https://youtu.be/8XIai8YD7nM

Scan me!

U word uitgenooi na ligte versnaperings
in die CPK-saal na afloop van die verassingsdiens

Baie dankie

Dit is in tye van uiterste beproewing dat ons opnuut ons eie sterflikheid besef, maar dit is ook dan dat ons die ware meelewing en ondersteuning van ons medemense ervaar. Ons het u steun bitter nodig.
Ons waardeer al u blyke van belangstelling en hulp. Baie dankie.

ALPHA & OMEGA
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alphascheepers@gmail.com
Facebook
Reneil Schoepers 082 344 9730
Jonathan Carelse 073 646 0208
we care/ons gee om!!!

IN LIEFDEVOLLE HERINNERING AAN

Christel D J Willemse

28 November 1963 - 22 April 2025

Diensorde:

Prediker	:	Ds. George Murray
Orrelis	:	Clarence Paulse
Votum		
Gebed		
Gesang		
Huldeblyk	:	Paul Willemse
Huldeblyk	:	Rochelle Saayman
Video	:	"Christel Pictorial"
Sangitem	:	Chrystal Jazz Pietersen
Skriflesing		
Gesang		
Preek	:	ds. George Murray
Gesang		
Bedanking	:	Clive Willemse
Gesang		
Dodemars		
Seën		

Verassingsdiens
ds. George Murray
Worcester-krematorium

Some day the silver cord will break

Some day the silver cord will break,
And I no more as now shall sing;
But oh, the joy when I shall wake
Within the palace of the King!

And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story – Saved by grace;
And I shall see Him face to face,
And tell the story – Saved by grace.

Some day my earthly house will fall,
I cannot tell how soon 'twill be;
But this I know – my All in All
Has now a place in heav'n for me. (Chorus)

Some day, when fades the golden sun
Beneath the rosy-tinted west,
My blessed Lord will say, "Well done!"
And I shall enter into rest. (Chorus)

Some day: till then I'll watch and wait,
My lamp all trimmed and burning bright,
That when my Savior opes the gate,
My soul to Him may take its flight. (Chorus)

Abide with me

Abide with me, fast falls the eventide
The darkness deepens, Lord, with me abide
When other helpers fail and comforts flee
Help of the helpless, oh, abide with me!

Swift to its close ebbs out life's little day
Earth's joys grow dim, its glories pass away
Change and decay in all around I see
O Thou who changes not, abide with me!

I fear no foe, with Thee at hand to bless
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness
Where is death's sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me!

Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies
Heaven's morning breaks, and earth's vain shadows flee
In life, in death, O Lord, abide with me!

In the Land of Fadeless Day (No Night There)

In the land of fadeless day lies the city four-square;
it shall never pass away and there is no night there.

God shall wipe away all tears; there's no death, no pain, nor fears;
and they count not time by years for there is no night there.

All the gates of pearl are made in the city four-square;
all the streets with gold are laid and there is no night there. (Refrain)

And the gates shall never close in the city four-square,
there life's crystal river flows, and there is no night there. (Refrain)

There thy need no sunshine bright, in that city four-square;
for the Lamb is all the light, and there is no night there. (Refrain)

CHRISTEL WILLEMSE's sudden passing left a profound void in the lives of her family and friends. This collection of funerary texts, *Requiem for / vir Christel,* brings together their heartfelt remembrances, offering a tribute to a life quietly and deeply lived. The second youngest of six siblings, Christel was born in the southern Cape coastal town of Mossel Bay and raised in Worcester, the principal town of the Boland region.

One friend writes: *"What made Christel truly special was her deep faith and humility. She didn't display her spirituality; it was simply who she was. It lived in how she treated people—her loyalty, her gentleness, and her ability to offer a smile, even in hard times. She was never one for grand gestures, but rather a woman of quiet strength."* Another calls her "*a special friend.*"

A younger family member fondly remembers her quirky expressions, such as, *"Voel jy sterk, voel jy fris, is jy gesond?"* ("Do you feel strong, do you feel fresh, are you healthy?"), while another speaks of her as *"a courageous woman with so much to give.*

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